

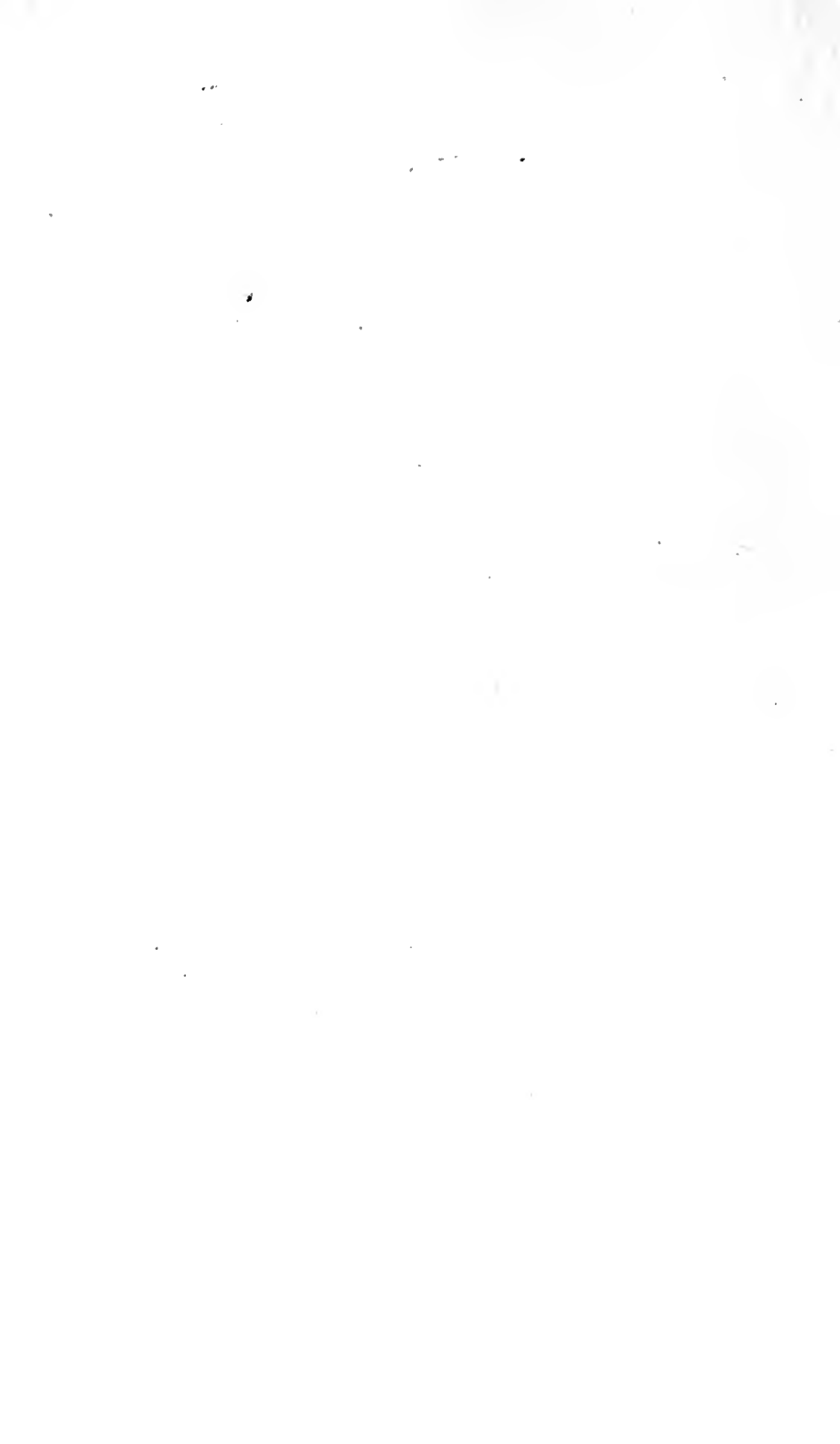
THE ENGLISH POETS.

EDITED BY T. B. WARD

BROWNING

MATTHEW ARNOLD

TENNYSON



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THE
ENGLISH POETS
SELECTIONS

WITH CRITICAL INTRODUCTIONS

BY VARIOUS WRITERS

AND A GENERAL INTRODUCTION BY
MATTHEW ARNOLD

EDITED BY

THOMAS HUMPHRY WARD, M.A.

Late Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford

APPENDIX TO VOL. IV

BROWNING, MATTHEW ARNOLD
TENNYSON

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ONE

ROBERT BROWNING.

[ROBERT BROWNING was born in 1812. His father was an official in the Bank of England, his mother of Scotch and German origin. In 1833 he published *Pauline*; in 1835 *Paracelsus*. In 1837 his tragedy of *Strafford* was produced by Macready, and in 1843, *A Blot in the Scutcheon*. *Sordello* appeared in 1840. From 1841 to 1846 he produced a series of poems under the name of *Bells and Pomegranates*: it comprised most of his plays and some of his finest Dramatic Romances and Lyrics, but it had not a large sale. In 1846 he married Elizabeth Barrett, the poetess, and they lived in Italy till her death in 1861. During these years he published *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, *In a Balcony*, and *Men and Women*. He returned to England in 1861 and lived chiefly in London. In 1864 he published *Dramatis Personæ*; in 1868-9 *The Ring and the Book*. During the last twenty years of his life his literary activity was great. He published *Balaustion's Adventure*, *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, *Fifine at the Fair*, *Aristophanes' Apology*, *The Agamemnon of Æschylus*, *The Inn Album*, *Pachiarotto*, *La Saisiaz*, *The Two Poets of Croisic*, *Dramatic Idyls*, *Jocoseria*, *Ferishtah's Fancies*, *Parleyings with certain People of Importance in their Day*. He died at Venice on Dec. 12, 1889, and almost on the same day was published his latest volume of poems, *Asolando*. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.]

Seventy years ago the critics and the public alike were bowing Tom Moore into the House of Fame and letting down the latch upon Shelley and Keats outside. This and other shocking examples of the vanity of contemporary criticism might impose eternal silence on the critic, did they not also make it plain that his mistakes are of no earthly consequence. For such door-keepers are but mortals, and the immortals have plenty of time; they keep on knocking. The door was obdurately shut against Browning for many years, but when it opened, it opened wide; and he is surely not of those whom another age shows out by the back way. But his exact position in England's House of Fame that other age must determine. Mere versatility does not there count for much; since in the scales of time one thing right well done is sure to outweigh many pretty well done. But that variousness of genius which

springs from a wide-sweeping imagination and sympathies that range with it counts for very much. In his comprehension of the varied aspects of human nature, in his power of dramatically presenting them, Browning stands alone among the poets of a great poetic age. Will these things loom larger in the distance, or when Prince Posterity comes to be King, will his royal eye be caught first by uncouth forms, by obscurities and weary prolixities? We cannot tell whether our poet will be freshly crowned or coldly honoured, for he beyond all others is the intellectual representative of his own generation, and his voice is still confused and it may be magnified by its echoes in the minds of his hearers.

His own generation indeed meant more than one. He represented in some respects the generation into which he was born, but yet more a later one which he ante-dated. This being so, he could not expect an eager welcome from his earlier contemporaries. Phantoms of the past are recognisable, and respectable, but phantoms of the future are rarely popular. Yet it was fortunate that he stood just where he did in time, rather than nearer to those who were coming to meet him and call him Master. For he was born while the divine breath of Poetry, that comes we know not whence and goes we know not whither, was streaming over England. He grew up through years when she stood elate, with victory behind her, and looking forward with all manner of sanguine beliefs in the future. So he brought into a later age not only the fuller poetic inspiration, the sincere Romance of the earlier, but its sanguine confident temperament. This temperament alone would not have recommended him to a generation which had been promised Canaan and landed in a quagmire, had it not been combined with others which made him one of themselves. But this being so, his cheerful courage, his belief in God and the ultimate triumph of good were as a tower of strength to his weaker brethren. It was not only as a poet, but as a prophet or philosopher, that he won his disciples. He himself once said that 'the right order of things' is 'Philosophy first, and Poetry, which is its highest outcome, afterwards.' Yet this union of Philosophy and Poetry is dangerous, especially if Philosophy be allowed to take precedence. For Philosophy is commonly more perishable than Poetry, or at any rate it is apt sooner to require resetting to rid it of an antiquated air. Whatever is worth having in the philosophy of a Rousseau soon passes into the common stock. *Emile* is dead, but Rousseau lives by his pictures of beautiful Nature and singular human nature.

Browning's philosophy is mainly religious. It has been said of him with truth : ' His processes of thought are often scientific in their precision of analysis ; the sudden conclusion which he imposes upon them is transcendental and inept.' This was not so much due to a defect in his own mind as to the circumstances of the world of thought about him. An interest in theological questions had been quickened and spread by more than one religious revival, and then scientific and historical criticism began to make its voice heard. Intelligent religious people could not close their ears to it, but they were as yet unprepared either to accept or to effectually combat its conclusions. Hence there arose in very many minds a confusion between two opposing strains of thought, similar to that which has been remarked in Browning's poetry, and something like a religious system in which what was called Doubt and Faith had each its allotted part. Here was plainly a transition state of thought, and it is one from which men's minds have already moved away in opposite directions ; but it has left deep traces on the literature of the middle Victorian period. Browning's philosophy does not fundamentally differ from that of other poets and writers of the time. It was by his superior powers of analysis, by the swiftness and ingenuity of his mind, that he was in advance of them and retained his influence over a generation that had ceased to look to them for guidance. Besides, his philosophy does not all bear the stamp of the temporary. He has some less transient religious thoughts, and many varied and fertile views of human life, breathing energy, courage, benignant wisdom ; and those who like can make a system of them.

But it is not by Philosophy, it is by Imagination and Form that a poet lives. In a century that has been wonderfully enriched with song, a time when we have all grown epicures in our taste for exquisite verse, too much has been said about Browning's want of form. It would be an absurdity to call a man a poet who had no sense of poetic form, who could not sing. Browning was a poet but not always a singer ; song was not to him the inevitable language, the supreme instinct. When he strains his metre by attempting to pack more meaning into a line than it will bear with grace, when he juggles with far-fetched and hideous rhymes, he really ceases to be a poet and puts his laurels in jeopardy. But oftener his form, more especially his blank verse form, is justified by the fact that he is essentially a dramatic poet ; his verse must fit the character and the mood in which he speaks. The Elizabethans, who were no

fumblers in the matter of metre, had their reasons for choosing a form for dramatic verse which should be not severe, but loose and flexible ; a form which might alternately approach the classical iambus, a lyric measure and plain prose, yet remain more forcible than prose by the retention of a certain beat. It resembles not a mask and cothurn, but a fine and flowing garment, following the movements of the actor's limbs. Great is the liberty of English unrhymed verse, and nobly it has been used ; it has given us the most various treasures, from the ordered magnificence of *Paradise Lost* to the lyric cry of Romeo at Juliet's grave. Browning has often misused his liberty, but by no means so often as his hasty critics suppose. Try to think of *Caliban on Setebos*, and even *Dominus Hyacinthus* in prose, and you see at once by the loss involved that they are really poems ; that is, that the verse form, and their own special form, is an essential part of their excellence. His unrhymed verse is seldom or never rich and stately, it is sometimes harsh and huddled ; but it is constantly vigorous and appropriate, it can flow with a clear idyllic grace, as in *Cleon* and *Andrea del Sarto*, or spring up in simple lyric beauty, as in *One Word more* and the dedication to *The Ring and the Book*. He had that great gift of singing straight from the heart which some great poets have lacked. Such songs have always an incommunicable charm, a piercing sweetness of their own. A strong emotion, whether personal or dramatic, has a magical effect in smoothing what is rugged and clearing what is turbid in Browning's style. For the rest, he wrote *Pippa passes*, the gallant marching *Cavalier Songs*, the galloping ballad of *How we brought the Good News*, the serene harmonies of *Love among the Ruins*. These, and many other outbursts of beautiful song, make it doubly ridiculous to speak of him as a poet who could not sing. Yet is it true that he frequently sacrificed sound to sense. This the plain person thinks right, but the poet knows or should know it to be wrong. And it did not even save him from obscurity. Such are his deficiencies—the more noticeable because the whole tendency of the century has been and is toward the perfecting of lyric and narrative forms of verse. In dramatic poetry this age of poets has been strangely poor. Let Shelley's lurid drama of *The Cenci* be set aside in the high place that it deserves : after that the first seventy years of this century produced nothing of importance as dramatic poetry except Browning's work. For what makes work dramatic ? Not special fitness for the stage, but the author's impersonality and power of

characterisation ; the clash of human passions and interests on each other, the event or even the accident, that as in a lightning-flash reveals the dim hearts of men. In his dramatic power Browning stands alone among the poets of the nineteenth century.

In another aspect he stands alone. While they have remained curiously untouched by the most important literary movement of the last fifty years, he has been in it, and even, for a time, in advance of it. In his *mesuré* as a poet he is a realist. His aim, like that of contemporary writers of prose fiction, is to see and represent human life and character as it is. The history of literature during the entire century has been a history of revolts. Daumier represents the eloquent M. Prudhomme telling his son, with a noble sweep of the arm, how on the place where they now stand once stood a tyrannous barrier, but he, M. Prudhomme, and his friends right bravely knocked it down. 'Yes, dear Papa,' returns the child, looking a few yards ahead, 'And then I see you built it up again a little further on.' The barrier of the conventional has been constantly moved on, here quickly, there slowly ; but in English poetry, since the great move that separated the eighteenth from the nineteenth century, it has been stationary. Browning climbed over it. He climbed over other barriers too, which have since been moved on. He was not afraid of passion when mild sentiment was the literary thing. Some one when he died made a sonnet commemorating him as the Poet of Love. For a moment it seemed strange that the philosopher, the psychologist, the man the ruggedness of whose genius had challenged so much criticism, should be lamented as the Poet of Love. Yet such he emphatically was. He was so not only because he had that power of singing straight from the heart to which I have before referred, but because he was fearlessly truthful in his presentation of human nature, and also because he was drawn by his dramatic bent to the strong situations which cannot be evolved out of mild sentiments. In the fearlessness as well as the subtlety of his psychology, he is from the first with Balzac rather than with his contemporaries in England, where the barriers were many and moved reluctantly. The play of light and shadow in the world, of good and evil in complex characters, has an endless attraction for him. The clear sweet song of his Pippa runs sparkling through dark scenes of crime and treachery ; Chiappino is at the height of heroism when the Nuncio comes to him, and like a wise benevolent kind of devil, shows him the stupidity of heroism and all that sort of thing, and how much better

he can serve the world by serving his own interests first. Twice, in *Paracelsus* and in *The Return of the Druses*, he has taken impostors for his heroes, and shown them to have been so largely because they were men of finer mould than the most honest of their dupes. From first to last he feels a passionate interest in 'the story of a soul.' Now the simple soul, like the knife-grinder, has got no story. The simple heart, however, may have story enough, and it is the Pippa of all his work. It is, above all, truth of which he is in search, whether he paints the sixteenth-century Bishop ordering his tomb, or the nineteenth-century Bishop chatting over his wine. His aim is to keep poetry in touch not merely with the life of the imagination, but with life in general. It is of course where it touches this modern life of ours that the real poetic *crux* occurs. There will always be the stuff of poetry in the world, so long as there are hearts and souls in it, and so long as the earth moves on through starry space, clothed in her beautiful vesture of air. But either the surface of our life has really grown prosaic, or we think it has, which comes to the same thing. It requires tact as well as boldness and power to harmonise it with the imaginative atmosphere that we expect in poetry. Browning sometimes failed in tact; at other times, as in *Waring* and the brief poem called *Confessions*, his touch was sure. But this realism of his, at its best as well as its worst, inevitably repelled readers who were only just beginning to relish realism in prose. Besides, he had a language of his own, with a strange new flavour about it, which made him seem much more obscure than he really was. So here a little ahead of his contemporaries and there a great way, most of Robert Browning's road was something solitary. The pleasanter for him when one fine day he found a troop of followers marching behind him; young folk, full of sympathy and enthusiasm.

He had other things in common with them, besides realistic and psychological tendencies. His poems from *Sordello* onwards bear witness to his love and knowledge of Italian Art. This he had gained for himself as he travelled through Italy, looking round him with a painter's eye. But Ruskin taught a younger generation to share it with him. Then, though from first to last a sturdy lover of England, he was something of a cosmopolitan in his sympathies; and cosmopolitanism is strongly characteristic of the literature of to-day, and even mildly characteristic of the literary man. It used not to be so. The novelists of Browning's date can never quite repress their chuckles at the idea of any one being

ridiculous enough to be born a Frenchman or a German. The other poets travelled and even made their homes in Italy, but they were interested only in its scenery and romance. Browning not only travelled much, but formed intimate friendships outside his own country, and when he and his wife lived in Florence it was not as strangers and sojourners. Their poems reflect their sympathy with the national life about them. For this freedom from provincialism, as well as for some other kindred qualities, he doubtless owed much thanks to his education, which was remarkable for its appropriateness to his genius. He was not machine made.

In yet another and a more important characteristic he was in harmony with the most modern developments. His dramatic bent was unseasonable in the middle years of this century. English literature had turned its back on the theatre, in spite of Macreadys and Kembles. Not only so, but its tendencies were non-dramatic. Scenes may of course be found in the works of the great novelists of the period which stand in contradiction to this. But all the same the tendency was towards a gentle development of plot and character, an absence of central situations, of crucial moments in the affairs and minds of men: that is, towards the non-dramatic. Browning instinctively turned towards the stage. He did not succeed there, yet one cannot but think that had circumstances encouraged the clever young man to go on writing stage-plays, he would eventually have learned the business. There is nothing to regret in the fact that he did not. His genius found for itself the most full and fitting expression. Through the plays, the Dramatic Romances and Lyrics, it swept on to that Dramatic Epic of *The Ring and the Book*, which perhaps most perfectly embodied it. The plan of *The Ring and the Book* grew so naturally out of the documents on which it was founded and his own habitual manner of writing, that probably he himself was hardly conscious of its originality; of its excellence as a device for breaking the monotony of a long poem. The brilliant Introduction tells the facts of the story with a lucidity to which he did not always attain. By thus on the threshold revealing his whole plot, he at once asserts and vindicates his old belief in the interest of the story of souls; for no one would wish it otherwise. Then at the touch of the magician's wand arise out of their dust the 'hearts that beat hard,' the brains that 'ticked two centuries since. All Rome is there, Arezzo too, yet the plan of the poem permits the principal figures to stand out clear against that

crowded background. They re-act dramatically upon each other, yet they are more complete than they could be in a play, where much must be left to conjecture. Long as it is, it is seldom long-winded. When it is, the remedy is plainly in the reader's own hands; another virtue of the plan. General practice has long suppressed Doctor Bottinius, and many persons think they can do without Tertium Quid; but this is not universal. At any rate it is possible without these to realise the rest; the pathetic figure of Pompilia, the wise great Pope, the philoprogenitive Dominus Hyacinthus, and Guido couched in his dungeon like a wolf at bay.

This great poem, which touches the high-water mark of Browning's genius, received at once its meed of praise. He had been ignored, he had been ridiculed, and now a reaction set in. The little band of Browning enthusiasts rapidly increased to a multitude, till at length he became a fashion. His very faults were glorified, and too much attention bestowed on such tentative and immature work as *Sordello*. There were many people to whom an obscure passage in Browning gave the amusement of an acrostic, *plus* the pleasures of intellectuality. Thus his obscurity was as much exaggerated by his admirers as by his opponents. Sometimes that obscurity may be justified by his own belief—a belief on which he did not always act—that poetry should suggest trains of thought rather than carry them out. At others it results from a real failure to crystallise a thought, or again from a kind of overwhelming of his powers of expression by the hurrying crowd of his ideas. But modern life is crowded and hurrying too. Already what may be called the acrostic interest in Browning is on the wane. As a fashion it needs must go. But besides the literary modists, there are in every generation the lovers of literature. To these we may leave in all confidence the works of Robert Browning, sure that they cannot miss seeing the treasure of true if alloyed gold that lies there; sure too that they will understand, as we cannot understand, how to send

a spirit

O' the proper fiery acid o'er its face;
And forth the alloy unfastened flies in fume,
While, self-sufficient now, the shape remains,
The rondure brave, the liliated loveliness,
Gold as it was, is, shall be evermore.

MARGARET L. WOODS.

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.

I.

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
'Good speed!' cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
'Speed!' echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place:
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight.
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew, and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, 'Yet there is time!'

IV.

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray;

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, 'Stay spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
We'll remember at Aix'—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And 'Gallop,' gasped Joris, 'for Aix is in sight!'

VIII.

'How they'll greet us!'—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buff-coat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
 As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
 As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
 Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
 Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.
 (1838.)

PIPPA'S SONG.

The year's at the spring,
 And day's at the morn ;
 Morning's at seven ;
 The hill-side's dew-pearled ;
 The lark's on the wing ;
 The snail's on the thorn :
 God's in his heaven—
 All's right with the world !
 (1841.)

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH.

ROME, 15—.

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity !
 Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping back ?
 Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not ! Well—
 She, men would have to be your mother once,
 Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !
 What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
 Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
 And as she died so must we die ourselves,
 And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
 Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie
 In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
 Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
 'Do I live, am I dead ?' Peace, peace seems all.
 Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;

And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know :
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care ;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same !
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit on the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk :
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands :
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,
Rosy and flawless : how I earned the prize !
Draw close : that conflagration of my church
—What then ? So much was saved if aught were missed !
My sons, ye would not be my death ! Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I ! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten figleaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*.
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst !
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he ?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons ? Black—

'Twas ever antique-black I meant ! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath ?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not ! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm ? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at !
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then !
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas !
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs ?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his need !
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke !
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's work :
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,

About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals, and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
'Do I live, am I dead?' There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death: ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

(1845.)

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
—He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire.
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devil's-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There will be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

(1845.)

DAVID SINGING BEFORE SAUL.

(From *Saul*.)

VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart ;
 And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered : and sparkles 'gan
 dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start,
 All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
 So the head : but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
 And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
 As I sang,—

IX.

‘ Oh, our manhood’s prime vigour ! No spirit feels waste,
 Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
 Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from rock up to rock,
 The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
 Of the plunge in a pool’s living water, the hunt of the bear,
 And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
 And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
 And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,
 And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
 That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
 How good is man’s life, the mere living ! how fit to employ
 All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy !
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou
 didst guard

When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward ?
 Didst thou kiss the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
 The low song of the nearly departed, and hear her faint tongue
 Joining in while it could to the witness, “ Let one more attest,
 I have lived, seen God’s hand thro’ a lifetime, and all was for
 best ” ?

Then they sung thro’ their tears in strong triumph, not much,
 but the rest.

And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence
 grew

Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true :

And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
 Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—
 Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;
 And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
 On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like
 the throe

That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets the gold go)
 High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning
 them,—all

Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!’

x.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp and voice,
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
 Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,
 The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,
 And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—‘Saul!’ cried I, and stopped,
 And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung
 propped

By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name.
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim,
 And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he alone,
 While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust
 of stone

A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp of
 the sheet?

Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
 And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain
 of old,

With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold:
 Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
 Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there
 they are!

—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
 Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his crest
 For their food in the ardours of summer. One long shudder thrilled
 All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled
 At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.

(1845.)

HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

I.

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

II.

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And, though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

(1845.)

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles,
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince,
Ages since,
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
 As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
 From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
 Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
 Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
 Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed
 Twelve abreast.

III.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
 Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
 And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
 Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
 Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
 Bought and sold.

IV.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
 Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
 Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
 As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
 Viewed the games.

V.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

VI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades,
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

I.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II.

Just as perhaps he mused 'My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall,—'
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV.

'Well,' cried he, 'Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon!
The Marshal's in the market-place,
And you'll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire,
Perched him!' The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V.

The chief's eye flashed ; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes.
'You're wounded !' 'Nay,' the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said :
'I'm killed, Sire !' And his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

I.

I wonder do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May ?

II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III.

Help me to hold it ! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope,
Among the honey-meal : and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope,
I traced it. Hold it fast !

V.

The champaign, with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers!

VII.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

VIII.

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

IX.

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

X

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI.

Already how am I so far
 Out of that minute? Must I go
 Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
 Onward, whenever light winds blow,
 Fixed by no friendly star?

XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn!
 Where is the thread now? Off again.
 The old trick! Only I discern—
 Infinite passion, and the pain
 Of finite hearts that yearn.

(1855.)

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

(As distinguished by an Italian Person of quality.)

I.

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
 The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
 Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

II.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
 There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
 While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
 Just on a mountain edge as bare as the creature's skull,
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
 —I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?
 They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take
 the eye!
 Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;

You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by ;
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets
 high ;
 And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

V.

What of a villa? though winter be over in March by rights,
 'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the
 heights :
 You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam
 and wheeze,
 And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-trees.

VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once ;
 In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.
 'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce arisen three fingers well,
 The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
 Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and
 splash !
 In the shade it sings and springs ; in the shine such foam-bows
 flash
 On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle
 and pash
 Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not abash,
 Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a
 sort of sash.

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you linger,
 Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted forefinger.
 Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and mingle,
 Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
 Late August or early September, the stunning cicada is shrill,
 And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs
 on the hill.
 Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever
 and chill.

IX.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells
begin :

No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in :
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood,
draws teeth ;

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping hot !
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were
shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law
of the Duke's !

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the reverend Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome and Cicero,
'And moreover,' (the sonnet goes rhyming,) 'the skirts of Saint
Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than
ever he preached.'

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our Lady borne
smiling and smart,

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck
in her heart !

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife ;
No keeping one's haunches still : it's the greatest pleasure in life.

X.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear ! fowls, wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays
passing the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city !
Beggars can scarcely be choosers : but still—ah, the pity, the pity !
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls
and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow
candles ;

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals :

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!
(1855.)

MAY AND DEATH.

I.

I wish that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful things;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

II.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps!
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

III.

So, for their sake, be May still May!
Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me: I bid
Sweet sights and songs throng manifold.

IV.

Only, one little sight, one plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

V.

That, they might spare; a certain wood
Might miss the plant; their loss were small:
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

(1857.)

PROSPICE.

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe ;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go :
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last !
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest !

(1861.)

RABBI BEN EZRA.

I.

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid!'

II.

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed 'Which rose make ours
Which lily leave and then as best recall?'
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned 'Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!'

III.

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

IV.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

V.

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

VI.

Then, welcome each rebuff
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
 Be our joys three-parts pain!
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
 Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

VII.

For thence,—a paradox
 Which comforts while it mocks,—
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
 What I aspired to be,
 And was not, comforts me:
 A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

VIII.

What is he but a brute
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
 To man, propose this test—
 Thy body at its best,
 How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

IX.

Yet gifts should prove their use:
 I own the Past profuse
 Of power each side, perfection every turn:
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,
 Brain treasured up the whole;
 Should not the heart beat once 'How good to live and
 learn?'

X.

Not once beat 'Praise be Thine!
 I see the whole design,
 I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
 Perfect I call Thy plan:
 Thanks that I was a man!
 Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!'

XI.

For pleasant is this flesh ;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest :
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

XII.

Let us not always say
‘Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!’
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry ‘All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps
soul!’

XIII.

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth’s heritage,
Life’s struggle having so far reached its term :
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute ; a god though in the germ.

XIV.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new :
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

XV.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby :
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold :
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame :
Young, all lay in dispute ; I shall know, being old.

XVI.

For, note when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey :
A whisper from the west
Shoots—‘Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth : here dies another day.’

XVII.

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o’er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
‘This rage was right i’ the main,
That acquiescence vain :
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past.’

XVIII.

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day :
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool’s true play.

XIX.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made :
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedest age : wait death nor be afraid !

XX.

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou call’st thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

XXI.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

XXII.

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

XXIII.

Not on the vulgar mass
Called 'work,' must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

XXIV.

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account:
All instincts immature
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

XXV.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped:
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

XXVI.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound
When the wine makes its round,
'Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!'

XXVII.

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

XXVIII.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

XXIX.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Scully-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

XXX.

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with
earth's wheel?

XXXI.

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men !
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst :

XXXII.

So, take and use Thy work,
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim !
My times be in Thy hand !
Perfect the cup as planned !
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same !
(1864.)

CONFESSIONS.

I.

What is he buzzing in my ears ?
'Now that I come to die,
Do I view the world as a vale of tears ?'
Ah, reverend sir, not I !

II.

What I viewed there once, what I view again
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

III.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall : is the curtain blue
Or green to a healthy eye ?

IV.

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
Blue above lane and wall ;
And that farthest bottle labelled 'Ether'
Is the house o'ertopping all.

V.

At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,
They watched for me, one June,
A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,
My poor mind's out of tune.

VI.

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
They styled their house 'The Lodge.'

VII.

What right had a lounge up their lane?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

VIII.

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled 'Ether,'
And stole from stair to stair,

IX.

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
We loved, sir—used to meet:
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet!

(1864.)

THE RING AND THE BOOK.

(Dedication.)

O lyric love, half angel and half bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
And sang a kindred soul out to his face,—
Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart—
When the first summons from the darkling earth
Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched their blue,
And bared them of the glory—to drop down,
To toil for man, to suffer or to die,—
This is the same voice: can thy soul know change?
Hail then, and harken from the realms of help!
Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of thee,
Except with bent head and beseeching hand—
That still, despite the distance and the dark,
What was, again may be; some interchange
Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,
Some benediction anciently thy smile:
—Never conclude, but raising hand and head
Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet yearn
For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,
Their utmost up and on,—so blessing back
In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,
Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face makes proud,
Some wanness where, I think, thy foot may fall!

(1868.)

THE HOUSEHOLDER.

(Epilogue to *Fifine at the Fair*.)

I.

Savage I was sitting in my house, late, lone :

Dreary, weary with the long day's work :

Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone :

Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like a Turk ;

When, in a moment, just a knock, call, cry,

Half a pang and all a rapture, there again were we !—

‘What, and is it really you again?’ quoth I :

‘I again, what else did you expect?’ quoth She.

II.

‘Never mind, hie away from this old house—

Every crumbling brick embrowned with sin and shame !

Quick, in its corners ere certain shapes arouse !

Let them—every devil of the night—lay claim,

Make and mend, or rap and rend, for me ! Goodbye !

God be their guard from disturbance at their glee,

Till, crash, down comes the carcass in a heap !’ quoth I :

‘Nay, but there’s a decency required !’ quoth She.

III.

‘Ah, but if you knew how time has dragged, days, nights !

All the neighbour-talk with man and maid—such men !

All the fuss and trouble of street-sounds, window-sights :

All the worry of flapping door and echoing roof ; and then

All the fancies . . . Who were they had leave, dared try

Darker arts that almost struck despair in me ?

If you knew but how I dwelt down here !’ quoth I :

‘And was I so better off up there?’ quoth She.

IV.

'Help and get it over! *Reunited to his wife*
 (How draw up the paper lets the parish-people know?)
Lies M., or N., departed from this life,
Day the this or that, month and year the so and so.
 What i' the way of final flourish? Prose, verse? Try!
Affliction sore long time he bore, or, what is it to be?
Till God did please to grant him ease. Do end!' quoth I:
 'I end with—Love is all and Death is nought!' quoth She.
 (1872.)

EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO.

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
 When you set your fancies free,
 Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
 —Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
 What had I on earth to do
 With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly:
 Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless did I drivel
 —Being—who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
 Never doubted clouds would break,
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
 Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
 Greet the unseen with a cheer!
 Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
 'Strive and thrive!' cry 'Speed,—fight on, fare ever
 There as here!'

(1889.)

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

[ELDEST son of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby; born Dec. 24, 1822, at Laleham, near Staines; educated at Winchester, Rugby, and Balliol College, Oxford. Won the Newdigate Prize, 1843, with a poem on 'Cromwell.' Published *The Strayed Reveller, and other Poems*. By A., 1849; *Empedocles on Etna, and other Poems* (same signature), 1852; *Poems, First Series*, 1853; *Poems, Second Series*, 1855. Elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford, 1857; re-elected, 1862 till 1867. It was as professorial lectures that his chief critical essays were first given to the world. He published *Merope, a Tragedy*, 1858; *New Poems*, 1867; and issued his collected poems in 1877, 1881, and 1885. His numerous prose writings were published between 1853 and 1888. He died suddenly, at Liverpool, on April 15, 1888.]

It is with a sad appropriateness that we include in the 'definitive' edition of *The English Poets* the poems of the eminent writer to whom we owe the General Introduction to the volumes. The fourteen years which have elapsed since their first publication have brought to a close the life of many a great Englishman, and to the poets they have been especially fatal. Rossetti went first, then Arnold, then his seniors, Browning and Tennyson. Sharing as Arnold did the greatness of the last two, there is a first and great distinction to be noticed between them and him. They were poets by profession, so to speak; they lived for poetry, and went on producing it regularly till the end of their long lives. He, on the other hand, was a busy public official, and from the year 1851 till his retirement from the Education Department in 1885, all the time that he could give to literature was saved from an exhausting daily round of work. Again, his literary vocation was not all poetical, as theirs was. It was as a critic that he was, in his life-time, most widely known, and that he had the most immediate effect upon his generation. But if the stream of his

verse is scanty ; if his three volumes look slight beside the sixteen volumes of Browning ; if, during a wide space of his middle life he almost ceased to write poetry—on the other hand, how little there is that one could wish away ! A certain largeness of production is undoubtedly necessary before one can admit the claim of an artist to the highest place ; but at the same time, excess of production is a commoner fault with poets than its contrary is. Instances of an over-chastened Muse like Gray's, or in a less degree, like Arnold's, are comparatively rare among true poets. While of Dryden, of Wordsworth, of Byron, more than half might well be spared, there is scarcely anything in Arnold's volumes—except perhaps *Balder Dead*—that has not a distinct value of its own, scarcely anything that ought not to be preserved. Of no poet is it more difficult to make a satisfying selection ; and we may echo in serious earnest the answer that he used laughingly to make to the friends who complained that this or that favourite was excluded from the poems chosen by him for the Golden Treasury volume—'If I had had my own way I should have included everything !'

Matthew Arnold's writings, in poetry and in prose, are their own commentary ; at least, even those who knew him best can say little about their genesis or their sources beyond what they themselves convey. No man of letters was ever more genial, or more affectionate to his friends, and yet none ever told less, even in intimate private letters, about his literary work or about those inmost thoughts of his which from time to time found expression in poetry. As a rule, he composed 'in his head,' like Wordsworth, and wrote down his verse on any scraps of paper that came handy ; whereas his prose was always written methodically, in the early morning hours. He had the habit, almost the passion, of destroying whatever manuscripts had served their purpose ; and at his death scarcely any scraps of his writings were found, and scarcely any of the multitudes of letters that he had received. Yet his letters to his family and friends remain, of course ; and it is to be hoped that before long we shall have Mr. George Russell's selection from them. This, though it will contain but few actual references to the poems, will naturally throw light upon them, and will show, as they do, how early his mind reached its maturity. The first little volume of poems, it will be remembered, was published in 1849, when Arnold was twenty-seven ; but five or six years before that he had written letters containing judgements which

he would have felt and expressed in just the same way twenty years later. From the beginning, in verse as in his intimate prose, Arnold gave evidence of a singularly clear, open mind, 'playing freely' upon all the aspects and all the problems of life as they presented themselves to him in turn. That was his natural endowment; but from the beginning, also, he set himself to enrich it by the persistent study of 'the best that is known and thought in the world,' as taught by the great writers of all times. Among these writers, the Greeks came first, and their influence penetrated deepest. Quite early in his poetical history he wrote his memorable sonnet 'To a Friend,' in answer to his question, 'Who prop, in these bad days, my mind?'; and the answer that he gave was to name two Greek poets and a Greek moralist, Homer, Sophocles, Epictetus. Companions of his youth, these influences remained with him to the end. One of the most surprising qualities of Arnold's mind was his power, in spite of the complexity of his own culture—in spite of the Hebraistic elements in it, and of the cross-influences of his multifarious reading—his power of assimilating the Greek spirit in its simplicity, and of presenting ideas, characters, images, with the clearness of Phidian sculpture or of Sophoclean verse. None was more conscious than he of 'this disease of modern life, with its sick hurry, its divided aims'—but none was less personally infected by it. Lucidity, the subject of one of the latest and most brilliant of his public addresses, was his characteristic from the first; a 'sad lucidity' perhaps, if we are to trust the bulk of his poems, but one that was never clouded by confusion. This 'critic clearness' was doubtless a gift of nature to him, but it was developed by a study of Greek literature which, with him, did not end when he left the University. Why, especially after the great success of his Oxford lecture on Theocritus ('Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment')—why he never carried out his scheme of a volume on the Greek poets, his friends never quite understood. He was not, indeed, a professed scholar, in the school and college sense of the word, but no writer of his day could have written so adequately of the poetical qualities of Sophocles and Pindar, just as none has written so suggestively of translating Homer.

Like Goethe, Arnold assimilated Greek forms in many of his writings. 'Even after his master,' wrote Mr. Swinburne in 1867, 'this disciple of Sophocles holds his high place; he has matched against the Attic of the gods this Hyperborean dialect of ours, and

has not earned the doom of Marsyas.' Such fragments as those from a *Deianira* and an *Antigone* are close imitations, while the lovely poem of *The Strayed Reveller* is as reminiscent of Greek form as of Greek matter. The special and characteristic Arnold metre, the unrhymed, lilting, quasi-anapaestic measure of *Heine's Grave* and *Rugby Chapel*, is a sort of adaptation, too, from Greek choric metres. It must not indeed be supposed, wrote Arnold in the preface to *Merope*, 'that these last [he is speaking of the choruses there, but the words have a wider application] are the reproduction of any Greek choric measures. So to adapt Greek measures to English verse is impossible: what I have done is to try to follow rhythms which produced on my own feeling a similar impression to that produced on it by the rhythms of Greek choric poetry.' The result is the metre of which we have spoken—Greek and yet not Greek; like the Attic chorus, but very different.

But just as there is a difference between the Attic and the Hyperborean in form, so there is in matter. Strongly as Arnold's view of the world, his 'criticism of life,' was influenced by Greek poetry and philosophy, there is a great, an essential distinction between him and his models. How comes it, people often ask, that he, over whose conversation, and over most of whose prose work, there played a delightful and a perpetual humour, should in his verse be so uniformly grave, so far removed from humour? How comes it that in his poetry he brings, not once nor twice, but perpetually, 'the eternal note of sadness in'? The truth is, that verse was for him, except in two or three of the poems with which he amused some of his latest days, the expression of his gravest self, and his most abiding thought. And here there was, as it were, a permanent *nostalgie* of a simpler and earlier age; a pained sense that the modern mind, delight as it may in the forms that ancient art has left us, can never re-create for itself the moral atmosphere in which that art had its origin. Hence the almost tragic note that sounds through so much of Arnold's poetry; the sad reflexion that he, whom nature and training had endowed with Hellenic clearness of vision and utterance, should have to express the thoughts of an age in which all is confusion and perplexity.

Hence, again, his fondness for certain types, repeating one another to a certain extent: Empedocles, who in his inability to live either for himself or in the world, plunges into the crater of Etna; the Scholar Gypsy, who seeks refuge among a primitive race from the torment of civilization; Obermann, retreating to the Swiss

mountains to contemplate life and his own soul. That so much of Arnold's poetry is given up to this class of subjects and of thoughts is largely due to the fact that his early manhood, the time when his poetic production was most active, lay in those years of 'storm and stress,' 1840 to 1850—the years of Chartism, of the 'Oxford Movement,' of continental revolution, of railway expansion, the years of Carlyle's greatest activity, and of George Sand's greatest effectiveness.

We have said that in counting up the literary influences that worked upon Arnold, the chief place must be given to the Greeks. He cared much less for the Latin than for the Greek writers, and was less touched by the charm of Virgil than Tennyson was; the lines to 'The Mantovano,' indeed, would have found as little response in him as would the alcaics 'To Milton.' In an Oxford lecture, famous at the time, but never printed, he called Lucretius 'morbid'; another lecture, on Propertius, he often announced but never delivered. Of the author of *Literature and Dogma* it need hardly be said that the Bible, considered both as literature and as a storehouse of profound reflexions upon human life, had a strong and permanent influence upon him. Some of the Fathers touched him a good deal; he studied St. Augustine's *Confessions* and the *Imitation*, and felt their power and charm; and the Introduction to these volumes of ours has put on record his view of Dante, that crown and flower of the mediæval Italian mind. But none of these were so much to him as the moderns—Shakespeare and Montaigne in their degree, Wordsworth and Byron of course, but most of all Goethe and some French writers of his own generation. One of his most treasured books was a fine copy of the thirty-volume edition of Goethe, which he had read through and assimilated as he assimilated the Greek classics in his boyhood. The 'wide and luminous view' of the writer whom Arnold called 'the greatest poet of his time, the greatest critic of all times,' had an extraordinary attraction for him. Sanity, the absence of caprice—these were to him the essential things; he found them in the Greeks, in Goethe, and in the great French tradition from Molière to Leconte de Lisle, from Montaigne to Sainte-Beuve. It was because he did not find them in Victor Hugo that he could never bring himself to join the body of that poet's votaries, and that he once said to the present writer, 'there is more in the one little volume of André Chénier than in the whole forty volumes of Hugo.'

It is hoped that the following selections, though far too brief to

represent fully the work of a poet so rich in thought as Arnold was, will be found to contain the most perfect, and many of the most suggestive and stimulating, of his poems. Many old favourites, indeed, will be missed altogether, and in two or three instances—not more—extracts have been given where the complete poems might have been expected or wished for. From a long narrative poem such as *Sohrab and Rustum*, this choice of a mere fragment was of course inevitable; and the Editor, after much consideration, has decided to exclude the whole of the beautiful early poem *Resignation*, except the famous page about the Poet. Arnold himself, though he never moved away from the conclusions of a poem which taught that the secret of life was ‘not joy but peace,’ came to regard it as faulty in workmanship, diffuse, and immature. One of the most interesting of his poems, speaking biographically, the *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*, has also been shut out, on the ground of a certain monotony in its composition; and the same fate, merely for reasons of space, has befallen that vivid summary, as it may be called, of the spiritual history of Europe, *Oberniann Once More*. We have printed *Thyrsis*, but have been forced to omit the poem which is, as it were, the introduction to it, *The Scholar Gypsy*, though it is one of the most characteristic of all, and though the long simile with which it concludes is as famous as anything the author ever wrote. Again, we have been forced to limit ourselves to one small fragment of *Empedocles on Etna*, the Song of Callicles, and have had to exclude the splendid monologue of the philosopher. Arnold for many years condemned it himself, and withdrew from publication the whole poem for the reasons which he gave in the celebrated Preface of 1853; but reflexion and the persuasions of his friends led him to cancel the sentence of banishment, and *Empedocles* reappeared in the ‘New Poems’ of 1867. Since that time it has held its place in every edition, and the opinion of all readers of poetry has confirmed the inclusion of it, however true may have been the poet’s feeling that it was wanting in dramatic action, and was, for enjoyment, too monotonously grave.

EDITOR.

TO A FRIEND.

Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?—
 He much, the old man, who, clearest-soul'd of men,
 Saw The Wide Prospect, and the Asian Fen¹,
 And Tmolus hill, and Smyrna bay, though blind.

Much he, whose friendship I not long since won
 That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
 Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
 Clear'd Rome of what most shamed him. But be his

My special thanks, whose even-balanced soul,
 From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
 Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;

Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole;
 The mellow glory of the Attic stage,
 Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

SHAKESPEARE.

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
 We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
 Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
 Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
 Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
 Spares but the cloudy border of his base
 To the foil'd searching of mortality;

¹ The name Europe (*Εὐρώπη*, *the wide prospect*) probably describes the appearance of the European coast to the Greeks on the coast of Asia Minor opposite. The name Asia, again, comes, it has been thought, from the muddy fens of the rivers of Asia Minor, such as the Cayster or Maeander, which struck the imagination of the Greeks living near them. (*Author's Note.*)

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

REQUIESCAT.

Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes;
Ah, would that I did too!

Her mirth the world required;
She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty hall of death.

HUMAN LIFE.

What mortal, when he saw,
Life's voyage done, his heavenly Friend,
Could ever yet dare tell him fearlessly:
'I have kept unfringed my nature's law;
The inly-written chart thou gavest me,
To guide me, I have steer'd by to the end'?

Ah! let us make no claim,
On life's incognisable sea,
To too exact a steering of our way;
Let us not fret and fear to miss our aim,
If some fair coast have lured us to make stay,
Or some friend hail'd us to keep company.

Ay! we would each fain drive
At random, and not steer by rule.
Weakness! and worse, weakness bestow'd in vain.
Winds from our side the unsuiting consort rive,
We rush by coasts where we had lief remain;
Man cannot, though he would, live chance's fool.

No! as the foaming swath
Of torn-up water, on the main,
Falls heavily away with long-drawn roar
On either side the black deep-furrow'd path
Cut by an onward-labouring vessel's prore,
And never touches the ship-side again;

Even so we leave behind,
As, charter'd by some unknown Powers,
We stem across the sea of life by night,
The joys which were not for our use design'd;—
The friends to whom we had no natural right,
The homes that were not destined to be ours.

[From *Resignation*.]

The poet, to whose mighty heart
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
Subdues that energy to scan
Not his own course, but that of man.
Though he move mountains, though his day
Be pass'd on the proud heights of sway,
Though he hath loosed a thousand chains,
Though he hath borne immortal pains,
Action and suffering though he know—
He hath not lived, if he lives so.

He sees, in some great-historied land,
A ruler of the people stand,
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
Roll through the heaving multitude,
Exults—yet for no moment's space
Envies the all-regarded place.
Beautiful eyes meet his—and he
Bears to admire uncravingly;
They pass—he, mingled with the crowd,
Is in their far-off triumphs proud.
From some high station he looks down,
At sunset, on a populous town;
Surveys each happy group, which fleets,
Toil ended, through the shining streets,
Each with some errand of its own—
And does not say: *I am alone.*
He sees the gentle stir of birth
When morning purifies the earth;
He leans upon a gate and sees
The pastures, and the quiet trees.
Low, woody hill, with gracious bound,
Folds the still valley almost round;
The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,
Is answer'd from the depth of dawn;
In the hedge straggling to the stream,
Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam;
But, where the farther side slopes down,
He sees the drowsy new-waked clown
In his white quaint-embroider'd frock
Make, whistling, tow'rd his mist-wreathed flock—
Slowly, behind his heavy tread,
The wet, flower'd grass heaves up its head.
Lean'd on his gate, he gazes—tears
Are in his eyes, and in his ears
The murmur of a thousand years.
Before him he sees life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole—
That general life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace;

That life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd
If birth proceeds, if things subsist ;
The life of plants, and stones, and rain,
The life he craves—if not in vain
Fate gave, what chance shall not control,
His sad lucidity of soul.

[From *Sohrab and Rustum*.]

He spoke ; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke ; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew ;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all—
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms—
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he ; yet he listen'd, plunged in thought
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon ; tears gather'd in his eyes ;
For he remember'd his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture ; as, at dawn,
The shepherd from his mountain-lodge describes
A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
Through many rolling clouds—so Rustum saw
His youth ; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom ;
And that old king, her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy ; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills

In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said:—

‘O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved.
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false—thou art not Rustum’s son.
For Rustum had no son; one child he had—
But one—a girl; who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.’

But Sohrab answer’d him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fix’d spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die—
But first he would convince his stubborn foe;
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

‘Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
I tell thee, prick’d upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.’

He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum’s cheeks,
And his knees totter’d, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank’d aloud;
And to his heart he press’d the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—

‘Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie!
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum’s son.’

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed

His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick'd; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands—
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain-rocks;
Him that kind creature found, and rear'd, and loved—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said:—
'How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?'

He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood
Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry:
O boy—thy father!—and his voice choked there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life; and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he seized
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,—
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms;
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said:—
'Father, forbear! for I but meet to-day

The doom which at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it ! but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel ; fate, fate engaged
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this ! I find
My father ; let me feel that I have found !
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say : *My son !*
Quick ! quick ! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift ; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.'

So said he, and his voice released the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth ; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts,
When they saw Rustum's grief ; and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other moved
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
Might mean ; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said :—

'Ruksh, now thou grieve'st ; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,
Or ere they brought thy master to this field !'

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said :—
'Is this, then, Ruksh ? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,
My terrible father's terrible horse ! and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane !
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I ;

For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said: *O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well !*—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream ;
But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream,
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.'

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd:—
'Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head !'

But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:—
'Desire not that, my father ! thou must live.
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscured, and die.
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age ;
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come ! thou seest this great host of men
Which follow me ; I pray thee, slay not these !
Let me entreat for them ; what have they done ?
They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
But carry me with thee to Seistan,
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.

And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all.
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and cry :
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill !
And I be not forgotten in my grave.'

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :—
'Fear not ! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be ; for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host ; yea, let them go !
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace !
What should I do with slaying any more ?
For would that all that I have ever slain
Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have—
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
So thou mightest live too, my son, my son !
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine ! and I might die, not thou ;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;
And say : *O son, I weep thee not too sore,*
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end !
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age,

And I shall never end this life of blood.'

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :—
'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man !
But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now,
Not yet ! but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear master in his grave.'

And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said :—
'Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea !
Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure.'

He spoke ; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
His wound's imperious anguish ; but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream ;—all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
By children whom their nurses call with haste
Indoors from the sun's eye ; his head droop'd low,
His limbs grew slack ; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed ; only when heavy gasps,
Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,
Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them,
And fix'd them feebly on his father's face ;
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead ;
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog; for now
Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,
Under the solitary moon;—he flow'd
Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN.

Come, dear children, let us away;
Down and away below!
Now my brothers call from the bay,
Now the great winds shoreward blow,
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,

Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away!
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go—
Call once yet!
In a voice that she will know:
'Margaret! Margaret!'
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear;
Children's voices, wild with pain—
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way!
'Mother dear, we cannot stay!
The wild white horses foam and fret.'
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;
Call no more!
One last look at the white-wall'd town,
And the little grey church on the windy shore;
Then come down!
She will not come though you call all day;
Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
Where great whales come sailing by,

Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye?
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate, on her knee.
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea;
She said: 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
'Twill be Easter-time in the world--ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee.'
I said: 'Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!'
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
'The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan;
Long prayers,' I said, 'in the world they say;
Come!' I said; and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town;
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little grey church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!
Dear heart,' I said, 'we are long alone;
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'
But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book!

Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more!
Come away, come down, call no more!

Down, down, down!
Down to the depths of the sea!
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings: 'O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy!
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well;
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun!'
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh;
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children;
Come children, come down!
The hoarse wind blows coldly;
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.

Singing : 'Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she!
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea.'

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low ;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starr'd with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanch'd sands a gloom ;
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town ;
At the church on the hill-side—
And then come back down.
Singing : 'There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she !
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea.'

AUSTERITY OF POETRY.

That son of Italy who tried to blow¹,
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,
In his light youth amid a festal throng
Sate with his bride to see a public show.

Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow
Youth like a star ; and what to youth belong—
Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation strong.
A prop gave way ! crash fell a platform ! lo,

¹ Giacomone di Todi.

'Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay!
Shuddering, they drew her garments off—and found
A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white skin.

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,
Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.

TO MARGUERITE.

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclosing flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our margs meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

THE STRAYED REVELLER.

THE PORTICO OF CIRCE'S PALACE. EVENING.

*A Youth. Circe.**The Youth.*

Faster, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild, thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul!

Thou standest, smiling
Down on me! thy right arm,
Lean'd up against the column there,
Props thy soft cheek;
Thy left holds, hanging loosely,
The deep cup, ivy-cinctured,
I held but now.

Is it, then, evening
So soon? I see the night-dews,
Cluster'd in thick beads, dim
The agate brooch-stones
On thy white shoulder;
The cool night-wind, too,
Blows through the portico,
Stirs thy hair, Goddess,
Waves thy white robe!

Circe.

Whence art thou, sleeper?

The Youth.

When the white dawn first
Through the rough fir-planks
Of my hut, by the chestnuts,

Up at the valley-head,
Came breaking, Goddess!
I sprang up, I threw round me
My dappled fawn-skin;
Passing out, from the wet turf,
Where they lay, by the hut door,
I snatch'd up my vine-crown, my fir-staff,
All drench'd in dew—
Came swift down to join
The rout early gather'd
In the town, round the temple,
Iacchus' white fane
On yonder hill.

Quick I pass'd, following
The wood-cutters' cart-track
Down the dark valley;—I saw
On my left, through the beeches,
Thy palace, Goddess,
Smokeless, empty!
Trembling, I enter'd; beheld
The court all silent,
The lions sleeping,
On the altar this bowl.
I drank, Goddess!
And sank down here, sleeping,
On the steps of thy portico.

Circe.

Foolish boy! Why tremblest thou?
Thou lovest it, then, my wine?
Wouldst more of it? See, how glows,
Through the delicate, flush'd marble,
The red, creaming liquor,
Strown with dark seeds!
Drink, then! I chide thee not,
Deny thee not my bowl.
Come, stretch forth thy hand, then—so!
Drink—drink again!

The Youth.

Thanks, gracious one !
Ah, the sweet fumes again !
More soft, ah me,
More subtle-winding
Than Pan's flute-music !
Faint—faint ! Ah me,
Again the sweet sleep !

Circe.

Hist ! Thou—within there !
Come forth, Ulysses !
Art tired with hunting ?
While we range the woodland,
See what the day brings.

Ulysses.

Ever new magic !
Hast thou then lured hither,
Wonderful Goddess, by thy art,
The young, languid-eyed Ampelus,
Iacchus' darling—
Or some youth beloved of Pan,
Of Pan and the Nymphs ?
That he sits, bending downward
His white, delicate neck
To the ivy-wreathed marge
Of thy cup ; the bright, glancing vine-leaves
That crown his hair,
Falling forward, mingling
With the dark ivy-plants—
His fawn-skin, half untied,
Smear'd with red wine-stains ? Who is he,
That he sits, overweigh'd
By fumes of wine and sleep,
So late, in thy portico ?
What youth, Goddess,—what guest
Of Gods or mortals ?

Circe.

Hist ! he wakes !
I lured him not hither, Ulysses.
Nay, ask him !

The Youth.

Who speaks ? Ah, who comes forth
To thy side, Goddess, from within ?
How shall I name him ?
This spare, dark-featured,
Quick-eyed stranger ?
Ah, and I see too
His sailor's bonnet,
His short coat, travel-tarnish'd,
With one arm bare !—
Art thou not he, whom fame
This long time rumours
The favour'd guest of Circe, brought by the waves ?
Art thou he, stranger ?
The wise Ulysses,
Laertes' son ?

Ulysses.

I am Ulysses.
And thou, too, sleeper ?
Thy voice is sweet.
It may be thou hast follow'd
Through the islands some divine bard,
By age taught many things,
Age and the Muses ;
And heard him delighting
The chiefs and people
In the banquet, and learn'd his songs,
Of Gods and Heroes,
Of war and arts,
And peopled cities,
Inland, or built
By the grey sea.—If so, then hail !
I honour and welcome thee.

The Youth.

The Gods are happy.
They turn on all sides
Their shining eyes,
And see below them
The earth and men.

They see Tiresias
Sitting, staff in hand,
On the warm, grassy
Asopus bank,
His robe drawn over
His old, sightless head,
Revolving inly
The doom of Thebes.

They see the Centaurs
In the upper glens
Of Pelion, in the streams,
Where red-berried ashes fringe
The clear-brown shallow pools,
With streaming flanks, and heads
Rear'd proudly, snuffing
The mountain wind.

They see the Indian
Drifting, knife in hand,
His frail boat moor'd to
A floating isle thick-matted
With large-leaved, low-creeping melon-plants,
And the dark cucumber.
He reaps, and stows them,
Drifting—drifting;—round him,
Round his green harvest-plot,
Flow the cool lake-waves,
The mountains ring them.

They see the Scythian
On the wide stepp, unharnessing

His wheel'd house at noon.
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meal—
Mares' milk, and bread
Baked on the embers ;—all around
The boundless, waving grass-plains stretch, thick-starr'd
With saffron and the yellow hollyhock
And flag-leaved iris-flowers.
Sitting in his cart
He makes his meal ; before him, for long miles,
Alive with bright green lizards,
And the springing bustard-fowl,
The track, a straight black line,
Furrows the rich soil ; here and there
Clusters of lonely mounds
Topp'd with rough-hewn,
Grey, rain-blear'd statues, overpeer
The sunny waste.

They see the ferry
On the broad, clay-laden
Lone Chorasman stream ;—thereon,
With snort and strain,
Two horses, strongly swimming, tow
The ferry-boat, with woven ropes
To either bow
Firm harness'd by the mane ; a chief,
With shout and shaken spear,
Stands at the prow, and guides them ; but astern
The cowering merchants, in long robes,
Sit pale beside their wealth
Of silk-bales and of balsam-drops,
Of gold and ivory,
Of turquoise-earth and amethyst,
Jasper and chalcedony,
And milk-barr'd onyx-stones.
The loaded boat swings groaning
In the yellow eddies ;
The Gods behold **them**.
They see the Heroes

Sitting in the dark ship
On the foamless, long-heaving
Violet sea,
At sunset nearing
The Happy Islands.

These things, Ulysses,
The wise bards also
Behold and sing.
But oh, what labour !
O prince, what pain !

They too can see
Tiresias ;—but the Gods,
Who give them vision,
Added this law :
That they should bear too
His groping blindness,
His dark foreboding,
His scorn'd white hairs ;
Bear Hera's anger
Through a life lengthen'd
To seven ages.

They see the Centaurs
On Pelion ;—then they feel,
They too, the maddening wine
Swell their large veins to bursting ; in wild pain
They feel the biting spears
Of the grim Lapithae, and Theseus, drive,
Drive crashing through their bones ; they feel
High on a jutting rock in the red stream
Alcmena's dreadful son
Ply his bow ;—such a price
The Gods exact for song :
To become what we sing.

They see the Indian
On his mountain lake ; but squalls
Make their skiff reel, and worms

In the unkind spring have gnawn
Their melon-harvest to the heart.—They see
The Scythian; but long frosts
Parch them in winter-time on the bare stepp,
Till they too fade like grass; they crawl
Like shadows forth in spring.

They see the merchants
On the Oxus stream;—but care
Must visit first them too; and make them pale.
Whether, through whirling sand,
A cloud of desert robber-horse have burst
Upon their caravan; or greedy kings,
In the wall'd cities the way passes through,
Crush'd them with tolls; or fever-airs,
On some great river's marge,
Mown them down, far from home.

They see the Heroes
Near harbour;—but they share
Their lives, and former violent toil in Thebes,
Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy;
Or where the echoing oars
Of Argo first
Startled the unknown sea.

The old Silenus
Came, lolling in the sunshine,
From the dewy forest-coverts,
This way, at noon.
Sitting by me, while his Fauns
Down at the water-side
Sprinkled and smoothed
His drooping garland,
He told me these things.

But I, Ulysses,
Sitting on the warm steps,
Looking over the valley,
All day long, have seen,

Without pain, without labour,
Sometimes a wild-hair'd Maenad—
Sometimes a Faun with torches—
And sometimes, for a moment,
Passing through the dark stems
Flowing-robed, the beloved,
The desired, the divine,
Beloved Iacchus.

Ah, cool night-wind, tremulous stars !
Ah, glimmering water,
Fitful earth-murmur,
Dreaming woods !
Ah, golden-hair'd, strangely smiling Goddess,
And thou, proved, much enduring,
Wave-toss'd Wanderer !
Who can stand still ?
Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me—
The cup again !

Faster, faster,
O Circe, Goddess,
Let the wild, thronging train,
The bright procession
Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul !

CALLICLES' SONG.

[From *Empedocles on Etna.*]

Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts.
Thick breaks the red flame ;
All Etna heaves fiercely
Her forest-clothed frame.

Not here, O Apollo !
Are haunts meet for thee.
But, where Helicon breaks down
In cliff to the sea,

Where the moon-silver'd inlets
Send far their light voice
Up the still vale of Thisbe,
O speed, and rejoice !

On the sward at the cliff-top
Lie strewn the white flocks,
On the cliff-side the pigeons
Roost deep in the rocks.

In the moonlight the shepherds,
Soft lull'd by the rills,
Lie wrapt in their blankets
Asleep on the hills.

—What forms are these coming
So white through the gloom ?
What garments out-glistening
The gold-flower'd broom ?

What sweet-breathing presence
Out-perfumes the thyme ?
What voices enrapture
The night's balmy prime ?—

'Tis Apollo comes leading
His choir, the Nine.

—The leader is fairest,
But all are divine.

They are lost in the hollows !
They stream up again !
What seeks on this mountain
The glorified train ?—

They bathe on this mountain,
In the spring by their road ;
Then on to Olympus,
Their endless abode.

—Whose praise do they mention ?
Of what is it told ?—
What will be for ever ;
What was from of old.

First hymn they the Father
Of all things; and then,
The rest of immortals,
The action of men.

The day in his hotness
The strife with the palm;
The night in her silence,
The stars in their calm.

DOVER BEACH.

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegaeon, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle fur'd!
But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

PALLADIUM.

Set where the upper streams of Simois flow
Was the Palladium, high 'mid rock and wood;
And Hector was in Ilium, far below,
And fought, and saw it not—but there it stood!

It stood, and sun and moonshine rain'd their light
On the pure columns of its glen-built hall.
Backward and forward roll'd the waves of fight
Round Troy—but while this stood, Troy could not fall.

So, in its lovely moonlight, lives the soul.
Mountains surround it, and sweet virgin air;
Cold plashing, past it, crystal waters roll;
We visit it by moments, ah, too rare!

We shall renew the battle in the plain
To-morrow;—red with blood will Xanthus be;
Hector and Ajax will be there again,
Helen will come upon the wall to see.

Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,
And fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind despairs,
And fancy that we put forth all our life,
And never know how with the soul it fares.

Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high
Upon our life a ruling effluence send.
And when it fails, fight as we will, we die;
And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

MORALITY.

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return
All we have built do we discern.

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,
Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,
Thy struggling, task'd morality—
Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,
Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,
Whose eye thou wast afraid to seek,
See, on her face a glow is spread,
A strong emotion on her cheek!
'Ah child!' she cries, 'that strife divine,
Whence was it, for it is not mine?

'There is no effort on *my* brow—
I do not strive, I do not weep;
I rush with the swift spheres and glow
In joy, and when I will, I sleep.
Yet that severe, that earnest air,
I saw, I felt it once—but where?

'I knew not yet the gauge of time,
Nor wore the manacles of space ;
I felt it in some other clime,
I saw it in some other place.
'Twas when the heavenly house I trod,
And lay upon the breast of God.'

MEMORIAL VERSES.

APRIL, 1850.

Goethe in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remain'd to come ;
The last poetic voice is dumb—
We stand to-day by Wordsworth's tomb.

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little ; but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal law ;
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said :
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
Physician of the iron age,
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear ;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said : *Thou ailest here, and here !*
He look'd on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power ;
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,
The turmoil of expiring life—

He said : *The end is everywhere,
Art still has truth, take refuge there!*
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!
He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen—on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?

Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear—
But who, ah! who, will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly—
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

RUGBY CHAPEL.

NOVEMBER, 1857.

Coldly, sadly descends
The autumn-evening. The field
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,
Fade into dimness apace,
Silent;—hardly a shout
From a few boys late at their play!
The lights come out in the street,
In the school-room windows—but cold,
Solemn, unlighted, austere,
Through the gathering darkness, arise
The chapel-walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
Of the autumn evening. But ah!
That word, *gloom*, to my mind
Brings thee back, in the light
Of thy radiant vigour, again;
In the gloom of November we pass'd
Days not dark at thy side;

Seasons impair'd not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast ! and I stand
In the autumn evening, and think
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round
Since thou arosest to tread,
In the summer-morning, the road
Of death, at a call unforeseen,
Sudden. For fifteen years,
We who till then in thy shade
Rested as under the boughs
Of a mighty oak, have endured
Sunshine and rain as we might,
Bare, unshaded, alone,
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now ? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain !
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm !

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
Prompt, unwearied, as here !
Still thou upraisest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly represses the bad !
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the border-land dim
'Twixt vice and virtue ; reviv'st,
Succourest !—this was thy work,
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth?—
Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die—
Perish;—and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,
In the moonlit solitudes mild
Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round
In an eddy of purposeless dust,
Effort unmeaning and vain.
Ah, yes! some of us strive
Not without action to die
Fruitless, but something to snatch
From dull oblivion, nor all
Glut the devouring grave!
We, we have chosen our path—
Path to a clear-purposed goal,
Path of advance!—but it leads
A long, steep journey, through sunk
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—
Then, on the height, comes the storm.
Thunder crashes from rock
To rock, the cataracts reply,
Lightnings dazzle our eyes.
Roaring torrents have breach'd
The track, the stream-bed descends

In the place where the wayfarer once
Planted his footstep—the spray
Boils o'er its borders ! aloft
The unseen snow-beds dislodge
Their hanging ruin ; alas,
Havoc is made in our train !
Friends, who set forth at our side,
Falter, are lost in the storm.
We, we only are left !
With frowning foreheads, with lips
Sternly compress'd, we strain on,
On—and at nightfall at last
Come to the end of our way,
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks ;
Where the gaunt and taciturn host
Stands on the threshold, the wind
Shaking his thin white hairs—
Holds his lantern to scan
Our storm-beat figures, and asks :
Whom in our party we bring ?
Whom we have left in the snow ?

Sadly we answer : We bring
Only ourselves ! we lost
Sight of the rest in the storm.
Hardly ourselves we fought through,
Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.
Friends, companions, and train,
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, my father ! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,
Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.

If, in the paths of the world,
Stones might have wounded thy feet,
Toil or dejection have tried
Thy spirit, of that we saw
Nothing—to us thou wast still
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!
Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe
In the noble and great who are gone;
Pure souls honour'd and blest
By former ages, who else—
Such, so soulless, so poor,
Is the race of men whom I see—
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
Seem'd but a cry of desire.
Yes! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all round me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile;
But souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God!—or sons
Shall I not call you? because
Not as servants ye knew
Your Father's innermost mind,
His, who unwillingly sees
One of his little ones lost—
Yours is the praise, if mankind
Hath not as yet in its march
Fainted, and fallen, and died!

See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.
Where are they tending?—A God
Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.
Ah, but the way is so long!
Years they have been in the wild!
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe;
Factions divide them, their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve.
—Ah, keep, keep them combined!
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive;
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
Stagger for ever in vain,
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardour divine!
Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.
Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave!
Order, courage, return.
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

THYRSIS.

A MONODY, *to commemorate the author's friend,*
ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH, *who died at Florence, 1861.*

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same;
The village-street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks—
Are ye too changed, ye hills?
See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays!
Here came I often, often, in old days—
Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Past the high wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?—
This winter-eve is warm,
Humid the air! leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and briers!
And that sweet city with her dreaming spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening,

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!—
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power
Befalls me wandering through this upland dim.
Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour;
Now seldom come I, since I came with him.
That single elm-tree bright
Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here,
But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick;
And with the country-folk acquaintance made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart;
But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.
He loved each simple joy the country yields,
He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
For that a shadow lour'd on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.
Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.
He went; his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks and all the grassy floor
With blossoms red and white of fallen May
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;

Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will return,
And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.

But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see;
See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee!

Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—
But when Sicilian 'shepherds lost a mate,
Some good survivor with his flute would go,
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate;
And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
And relax Pluto's brow,
And make leap up with joy the beauteous head
Of Proserpine, among whose crowned hair
Are flowers first open'd on Sicilian air,
And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.

O easy access to the hearer's grace
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
She knew each lily white which Enna yields,
Each rose with blushing face;
She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.
But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!
Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirr'd;
And we should tease her with our plaint in vain!

Well! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,
Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!

Who, if not I, for questing here hath power?
I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
I know the Fyfield tree,
I know what white, what purple fritillaries
The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,
And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries;

I know these slopes; who knows them if not I?—
But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,
Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried
High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,
Hath since our day put by
The coronals of that forgotten time;
Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,
And only in the hidden brookside gleam
Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,
Above the locks, above the boating throng,
Unmoor'd our skiff when through the Wytham flats,
Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among
And darting swallows and light water-gnats,
We track'd the shy Thames shore?
Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell
Of our boat passing heaved the river-grass,
Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass?—
They all are gone, and thou art gone as well!

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil draw soft across the day,
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;
I feel her finger light
Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;—
The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
The heart less bounding at emotion new,
And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
To the less practised eye of sanguine youth;
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,
Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!
Unbreachable the fort
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall;
And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,
And near and real the charm of thy repose,
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
Of quiet!—Look, adown the dusk hill-side,
A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come.
Quick! let me fly, and cross
Into yon farther field!—'Tis done; and see,
Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,
The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,
The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,
And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.
I cannot reach the signal-tree to-night,
Yet, happy omen, hail!
Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno-vale
(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
The morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery oleanders pale),

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there!—
Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him;
To a boon southern country he is fled,
And now in happier air,

Wandering with the great Mother's train divine
(And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see)
Within a folding of the Apennine,

Thou hearest the immortal chants of old!—
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,
For thee the Lityerses-song again
Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing;
Sings his Sicilian fold,
His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes—
And how a call celestial round him rang,
And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,
And all the marvel of the golden skies.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
Sole in these fields! yet will I not despair.
Despair I will not, while I yet descry
Neath the mild canopy of English air
That lonely tree against the western sky.
Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
Woods with anemones in flower till May,
Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold—
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound;
Thou wanderedst with me for a little hour!

Men gave thee nothing ; but this happy quest,
If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,
If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.
And this rude Cumner ground,
Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,
Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,
Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime !
And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

What though the music of thy rustic flute
Kept not for long its happy, country tone ;
Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note
Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,
Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat—
It fail'd, and thou wast mute !
Yet hadst thou alway visions of our light,
And long with men of care thou couldst not stay, .
And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here !
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
Thyrsis ! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.
—Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
To chase fatigue and fear ;
Why faintest thou ? I wander'd till I died.
Roam on ! The light we sought is shining still.
Dost thou ask proof ? Our tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON.

[ALFRED TENNYSON was born on Aug. 6, 1809, at Somersby Rectory, Lincolnshire. He was the third son of the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, LL.D., Rector of Somersby; his mother was a daughter of the Rev. Stephen Fytche. After education at Louth Grammar School, and at home, he went in 1828 to Trinity College, Cambridge. His 'Poems, chiefly Lyrical,' appeared in 1830. In 1850, having meanwhile won the foremost place among living English poets, he succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate (Nov. 19). In June of the same year he married Miss Emily Sellwood. His first home after marriage was at Twickenham, where his eldest son, Hallam, was born in 1852. In 1853 he removed to Farringford, near Freshwater, in the Isle of Wight, where his second son, Lionel, was born in 1854. From the year 1869 onwards he had also a second home, Aldworth, near Haslemere in Surrey, where he usually passed the summer and early autumn. In January, 1884, he was created a peer, by the title of Baron Tennyson, of Aldworth and Farringford. He died at Aldworth on Oct. 6, 1892, aged eighty-three years and two months; and on Oct. 12 was buried in Westminster Abbey.]

The gifts by which Tennyson has won, and will keep, his place among the great poets of England are pre-eminently those of an artist. His genius for vivid and musical expression was joined to severe self-restraint, and to a patience which allowed nothing to go forth from him until it had been refined to the utmost perfection that he was capable of giving to it. And his 'law of pure and flawless workmanship' (as Matthew Arnold defines the artistic quality in poetry) embraced far more than language: the same instinct controlled his composition in the larger sense; it is seen in the symmetry of each work as a whole, in the due subordination of detail, in the distribution of light and shade, in the happy and discreet use of ornament. His versatility is not less remarkable: no English poet has left masterpieces in so many different kinds of verse. On another side the spiritual subtlety of the artist is seen in the power of finding words for dim and fugitive traits of con-

sciousness ; as the artist's vision, at once minute and imaginative, is seen in his pictures of nature. By this varied and consummate excellence Tennyson ranks with the great artists of all time.

This is the dominant aspect of his poetry. But there is another which presents itself as soon as we take the historical point of view, and inquire into the nature of his influence upon his age. Tennyson was not primarily, like Wordsworth, a philosophical thinker, who felt called upon to be a teacher. But from the middle of the century onwards he was the accepted poet, in respect to thought on religion and on many social questions, of that large public which might be described as the world of cultivated and moderately liberal orthodoxy. Multitudes of these readers were imperfectly capable of appreciating him as an artist : have not some of them been discussing who is ' the Pilot ' in *Crossing the Bar* ? But at any rate they heard a voice which they could generally understand ; they felt that it was beautiful and noble ; and they loved it because it soothed and elevated them. They cherished a poet who placed the centre of religion in a simple reliance on the divine love ; who taught that, through all struggles and perplexities, the time was being guided towards some final good ; who saw the results of science not as dangers but as reinforcements to faith ; who welcomed material progress and industrial vigour, but always sought to maintain the best traditions of English history and character. Now, this popular element in Tennyson's fame—as it may be called relatively to those elements which sprang from a full appreciation of his art—was not due to any conscious self-adaptation on his part to prevailing currents of thought and feeling. It arose from the peculiar relation of his genius to the period in which he grew up to manhood. His early youth was in England a day of bright dreams and confident auguries ; for democracy and steam, all things were to be possible. Then came the reaction ; doubts and difficulties thickened ; questions started up in every field, bringing with them unrest, discouragement, or even despair. At such a season the poet who is pre-eminently an artist has a twofold opportunity ; by creating beauty he can comfort the weary ; but a yet higher task is to exercise, through his art, an ennobling and harmonizing influence on those more strenuous yet half-desponding spirits who bear the stress of the transition, while new and crude energies are threatening an abrupt breach with the past. It is a great work to do for a people, to win the popular ear at such a time for counsels of reverence and chivalry ; to make them

feel that these things are beautiful, and are bonds of the national life, while the forces that tend to disintegration are also tending to make the people sordid and cynical. This is the work that Sophocles, in his later years, did for Athens, and this is what Tennyson did for the England of his prime.

His reputation was established with comparative ease. The volume, 'Poems by Two Brothers' (1827), which he and his brother Charles published before they went to Cambridge, showed chiefly a love of poetry, and (in *Persia*) an exceptional ear for sound : but the Cambridge prize-poem on 'Timbuctoo' (1829) was really notable, both in style and in the command of blank verse ; it was a presage, however faint and immature, of the future, and was hailed with a natural delight by the author's friends. In 1830 he brought out 'Poems, chiefly Lyrical'—a thin volume, comprising many poems that have held their place, such as *Claribel*, *Mariana*, and *The Dying Swan*. Writing in the *Englishman's Magazine*, Arthur Hallam said, 'The features of original genius are clearly and strongly marked. The author imitates nobody.' Tennyson's style was, indeed, from the first wholly distinct from that of any poet who had preceded him. Two years later (1832) he published another volume, entitled simply 'Poems,' and including, among others, *Cenone*, *The Palace of Art*, *The Lotus-Eaters*, *A Dream of Fair Women*, and *The Lady of Shalott*. There was riper art here than in the former book—larger range of themes, greater depth of feeling, and more human interest ; but, though the new work was cordially received by many, the full day of Tennyson's fame was not yet. In that charming poem of his latest years, *Merlin and the Gleam*—an allegorical retrospect of the poet's own career—a certain moment in one of its earlier stages is indicated by 'the croak of a raven,' a bird which, indeed, seldom fails to cross a new singer's path at one point or another. The world at large was still (to quote *Merlin* again), 'blind to the magic, and deaf to the melody.' Then it was that Tennyson showed his reserved strength. He was silent for ten years, during which he subjected his old work to unsparing revision, and disciplined himself for work yet better by unwearying self-criticism. In 1842 'Poems by Alfred Tennyson' appeared in two volumes. The first volume contained chiefly old poems, revised or re-cast. The pieces in the second volume were almost all new ; among them were *The Gardener's Daughter*, *Locksley Hall*, *Break, break, break*, *The Two Voices*, *Ulysses*, and *Morte d'Arthur*. The success was rapid and great. Wordsworth, in a letter to a friend, generously

described the author as 'decidedly the first of our living poets.' Tennyson was then only thirty-three. In the popular estimate his reputation was perhaps not much enhanced by *The Princess* (1847), many as are its beauties, especially lyrical. But when *In Memoriam* appeared, in 1850, it soon won for him a fame as wide as the English-speaking world.

In Memoriam is a typical product of his art, but it is even more representative of his attitude towards the problems and mysteries of human life; it is the poem which best reveals the secret of his largest popularity. It might have seemed hopeless to expect general favour for an elegy of such unprecedented length on a youth who had 'miss'd the earthly wreath,' leaving a memory cherished by a few friends, who alone could measure the unfulfilled promise. Never, perhaps, has mastery of poetical resource won a more remarkable triumph than in Tennyson's treatment of this theme. The stanza selected, with its twofold capacity for pathos and for resonance, is exactly suited to a flow of self-communing thought, prevaillingly pensive, but passing at moments into a loftier or more jubilant note. The rhythm of this stanza also suits the division of the poem into sections; since the cadence of the fourth line—where the rhyme has less emphasis than in the central couplet—can introduce a pause without giving a sense of abruptness. Hence the music of the poem as a whole is continuous, while at the same time each section is an artistic unit. But this felicity is not merely technical; it is closely related to the treatment of the subject-matter. Two strains are interwoven throughout; one is personal—the memory and the sorrow, as they affect the poet; the other is broadly human and general—the experience of the soul as it contemplates life and death, as it finds or misses comfort in the face of nature, as it struggles through doubt to faith, or through anguish to peace. The blending of these two strains—which are constantly passing into each other—serves to idealise the theme, and so to justify the large scale of the treatment; it has also this effect, that the poem becomes a record of successive spiritual moods, varied as the range of thought and emotion into which the personal grief broadens out. The composition of *In Memoriam* was, indeed, spread over seventeen years. The form has thus an inner correspondence with the material; each lyric section is a spiritual mood—not sharply separated from that which precedes or from that which follows it, yet with a completeness of its own. Among particular traits, one which deserves especial notice is the wonderful

adumbration of the lost friend's power and charm. Neither quite definite nor yet mystic, the presence made sacred by death flits, with a strange light around it, through the poem; it never comes or goes without making us feel that this great sorrow is no fantasy, but has its root in a great loss. The religious thought of *In Memoriam* bears the stamp of the time at which it was produced, in so far as doubts, frankly treated, are met with a sober optimism of a purely subjective and emotional kind. But the poem has also an abiding and universal significance as the journal of a mind slowly passing through a bitter ordeal, and as an expression of reliance on the 'Strong Son of God, immortal Love.'

The *Idylls of the King*, in their complete form, include work of various periods. Tennyson's interest in the legends of the Arthurian cycle was shown at an early date, and was fruitful at intervals during half a century. *The Lady of Shalott* (1832) was his lyric prelude to the theme; two kindred lyrics—*Sir Galahad* and *Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere*—found place in the volumes of 1842, which contained also the epic *Morte d'Arthur*, now incorporated in *The Passing of Arthur*. A half-playful prologue introduces the *Morte d'Arthur* as the only surviving canto of an epic which had been consigned to the flames: perhaps the poet felt, in 1842, that the taste for 'romance' had so far waned as to render this 'fragment' somewhat of an experiment. It is one of his finest pieces of blank verse, and the reception given to it was an invitation to continue the strain. But it was not till 1859 that he published the first set of *Idylls*—*Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere*. In 1870 appeared *The Coming of Arthur*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*; followed in 1872 by *Gareth and Lynette* and *The Last Tournament*, and in 1885 by *Balin and Balan*. The twelve books (two being given to *Enid*) are now arranged in the order of events; but in the order of composition, as we have seen, the last portion of the story came first, the beginning next, and the middle last. Such a process of growth is in itself a warning that the series, though it had been planned from the outset as a whole, should not be tried by the ordinary tests of an epic: the unity is here less strict; the main current of narrative is less continuous. 'Idyll' is, indeed, exactly the right word; each is a separate picture, rich in passages of brilliant power, but distinguished especially by finish of detail. Arthur's ideal purpose is rather a golden thread, common to the several pieces but not equally vital to all, than an organic bond

among them ; and the pervading allegory of 'sense at war with soul' is at most a link of another kind. But instead of epic concentration these Idylls have a charm of their own. From tracing the destiny of the king, they lead us aside, now and again, into those by-ways of romance where a light tinged with modern thought and fancy is thrown on mediaeval forest and castle, on tournament and bower, on the chivalry, the tenderness, the violence, the enchantments, and the faith. Arthur's fortunes are illustrated by his age. No other single work shows so comprehensively the range of Tennyson's power ; the variety of the theme demands a corresponding wealth of resource ; there is scarcely any mood of the mind, any phase of action, any aspect of nature which does not find expression somewhere or other in the *Idylls*.

But a poet who is everywhere an exquisite artist, and who is also remarkably versatile, cannot be adequately judged except by the sum total of his work ; there are notes which he may strike only once or twice in the whole of it. Thus in *Maud*—never a popular poem, in spite of the marvellous lyrics—he touches his highest point in the utterance of passion ; its dramatic power is undisputed. The general verdict upon his plays has been that they are more distinguished by excellence of literary execution than by qualities properly dramatic ; though few critics, perhaps, would deny the dramatic effectiveness of particular scenes or passages, in *Harold*, for example, or *Becket*, or *The Cup*. But whatever may be the final judgment upon the plays, *Maud* remains to prove that, among Tennyson's gifts, the dramatic gift was at least not originally absent ; though its manifestation in that poem is necessarily limited to a particular phase. Turning next to a different region of his work, we see in *The Northern Farmer* ('old style') a quality which hardly any imaginative writer of this century has better exemplified—the power of faithfully conceiving a very narrow mental horizon, without allowing a single disturbing ray to steal in from the artist's own mind. Again : in the interpretation of feeling, this poet can seize impressions so transient, so difficult of analysis, that they might seem to defy the grasp of language ; one recognizes them almost with a start, as if some voice, once familiar, were unexpectedly heard ;

'Moreover something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams.'

Or :

‘The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.’

Akin to this faculty is Tennyson’s subtle expression of *desiderium*, the indefinable yearning towards ‘the days that are no more,’ as in *Break, break, break*, or in *Tears, idle tears*.

His descriptions of nature exhibit two qualities, distinct in essence, though sometimes combined. One appears in his landscape-painting: it is the gift of selecting salient features and composing them into an artistic picture—such as that of the ‘vale in Ida,’ where

‘The swimming vapour floats athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn’;

or of that coral island where Enoch Arden heard

‘The league-long roller thundering on the reef,
The moving whisper of huge trees that branch’d
And blossom’d in the zenith . . .’

The distinction of his imaginary landscapes is not merely vividness or truth, but the union of these with a certain dreamy and ærial charm. His other great quality as a nature-poet is seen in the treatment of detail—in vignettes where the result of minute and keen insight is made to live before us in some magical phrase; such as ‘The shining levels of the lake’; ‘The twinkling laurel scatters silver lights’; the shoal of fish that ‘came slipping o’er their shadows on the sand.’ His accuracy in this province is said to be unerring: thus a critic who twitted him with having made a ‘crow’ lead a ‘rookery’ had to learn that in Lincolnshire, as in some other parts of Britain, ‘crow’ is the generic term. In this context we must not forget *Owd Roä*—as pathetic a tribute as any in English poetry to the heroism of a dog. In regard to the vegetation of England, and, generally, to the peculiar charm of English scenery, Tennyson is the foremost of English poets; no one else has painted them with such accurate felicity. Among the English poets of the sea, too, he has a high place; he can describe, as in *Elaine*, the wind in strife with the billow of the North Sea, ‘green-glimmering toward the summit’; but especially his verse can give back all the tones of the sea upon the shore, and can interpret their sympathy with the varying moods of the human spirit.

Seven of his poems are on subjects from Greek mythology—*The Lotus-Eaters*, *Ulysses*, *Ænone*, *The Death of Ænone*, *Tithonus*, *Tiresias*, *Demeter and Persephone*. In each case he has chosen a theme which left scope for artistic originality—the ancient material being either meagre or second-rate. Each poem presents, in small or moderate compass, the picture of a moment, or of an episode; ‘brief idyll’ is the phrase by which he describes his *Tiresias* (in the lines on the death of Edward Fitzgerald). The common characteristic of these seven poems is the consummate art which has caught the spirit of the antique, without a trace of pedantry in form or in language. The blank verse (used for all except *The Lotus-Eaters*) has a restrained power, and a flexible yet majestic grace, which produces an effect analogous to that of Greek sculpture. Tennyson’s instinct for classical literary art appears in his epitome of Virgil’s style—

‘All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a lonely word’;

as, again, his sympathy with the temper of the old world’s sorrow is seen in the verses written at ‘olive-silvery Sirmio,’ and suggested by the lines of Catullus, *Frater ave atque vale*. In *Lucretius* Tennyson shows an intimate knowledge of that poet’s work, and a curious skill in reproducing his tone; but the highest interest of this masterpiece is psychological and dramatic. It translates the sober earnestness of Lucretius into a morbid phase. The *De Rerum Natura* is silent on the difficulty of reconciling the gods with the cosmology of Epicurus. But now, when the whole inner life of Lucretius is unhinged by the workings of the poison, the doubt, so long repressed by reverence for the Greek master, starts up—

‘The Gods! the Gods!

If all be atoms, how then should the Gods

Being atomic, not be dissoluble,

Not follow the great law?’

Tennyson’s English is always pure and idiomatic, avoiding foreign words, though without pedantic rigour; and he commands many different shades of diction, finely graduated according to the subject. One of his aims was to recall expressive words which had fallen out of common use; in the Idylls, more especially, he found scope for this. His melody, in its finer secrets, eludes analysis; but one element of it, the delicate management of vowel-sounds, can be seen in such lines as ‘The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm’;

or, 'Katie walks by the long wash of Australasian seas.' The latter verse illustrates also another trait of his melody—the restrained use of alliteration, which he scarcely allows, as a rule, to strike the ear, unless he has some artistic motive for making it prominent, as in parts of *Maud*, and in some of the songs in *The Princess*. As a metrist, he is the creator of a new blank verse, different both from the Elizabethan and from the Miltonic. He has known how to modulate it to every theme, and to elicit a music appropriate to each; attuning it in turn to a tender and homely grace, as in *The Gardener's Daughter*; to the severe and ideal majesty of the antique, as in *Tithonus*; to meditative thought, as in *The Ancient Sage*, or *Akbar's Dream*; to pathetic or tragic tales of contemporary life, as in *Aylmer's Field*, or *Enoch Arden*; or to sustained romantic narrative, as in the *Idylls*. No English poet has used blank verse with such flexible variety, or drawn from it so large a compass of tones; nor has any maintained it so equably on a high level of excellence. In lyric metres Tennyson has invented much, and has also shown a rare power of adaptation. Many of his lyric measures are wholly his own; while others have been so treated by him as to make them virtually new. The *In Memoriam* stanza had been used before him, though he was unaware of this when he adopted it; but no predecessor had shown its full capabilities. In the first part of *The Lotus-Eaters* he employs the Spenserian stanza, but gives it a peculiar tone, suited to the theme; the melody is so contrived that languor seems to weigh upon every verse. To illustrate his lyric harmonies of form and matter would be to enumerate his lyrics; two or three instances must suffice. The close-locked three-line stanza of *The Two Voices* suits the series of compact sentiments or points:

'Then to the still small voice I said,
Let me not cast in endless shade
What is so wonderfully made.'

In *The Palace of Art*, the shortened fourth line of the quatrain gives a restful pause, inviting to the contemplation of pictures:—

Or in a clear-walled city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;
An angel look'd at her.

The stanza of *The Daisy*, again, suits the light grace which plays around those memories of travel :—

O Love, what hours were thine and mine,
In lands of palm and southern pine;
In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

These are, however, only a few lyric examples of a quality which belongs to all his work. Throughout its wide range, he has everywhere accomplished the harmony of form and matter: the charm of the utterance is indivisible from the charm of the thought. Poetical art which has done this is raised above changes of tendency or fashion; it is as permanent as beauty. Tennyson, in wielding the English language, has been a great and original artist; he has enriched English literature with manifold and imperishable models of excellence. He has expressed, with absolute felicity, numberless phases in the great primary emotions of human nature—love, joy, grief, hope, despondency, the moods of youth and of age, the response in the soul to the various aspects of nature, the sense of awful mystery in human life, the instincts, vague yet persistent, which aspire to immortality, and seem to promise it, the yearning faith in divine goodness and guidance—feelings common to humanity, no doubt, but not therefore commonplace, unless that epithet is applicable to sunrise and starlight. His teaching has been pure, high-hearted, and manly; full of love for his country, and true to the things which have made England great. Among all the masters of English song, there is none who can give more exquisite delight to those who feel his inmost charm; and there is probably none who has brought a larger gift of noble pleasure and of comfort to people of all sorts, especially to those in perplexity or sorrow.

R. C. JEBB.

CLARIBEL.

A MELODY.

I.

Where Claribel low-lieth
The breezes pause and die,
Letting the rose-leaves fall :
But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,
With an ancient melody
Of an inward agony,
Where Claribel low-lieth.

II.

At eve the beetle boometh
Athwart the thicket lone :
At noon the wild bee hummeth
About the moss'd headstone :
At midnight the moon cometh,
And looketh down alone.
Her song the lintwhite swelleth,
The clear-voiced mavis dwelleth,
The callow throstle lispeth,
The slumbrous wave outwelleth,
The babbling runnel crispeth,
The hollow grot replieth
Where Claribel low-lieth.

A DIRGE.

I.

Now is done thy long day's work ;
Fold thy palms across thy breast,
Fold thine arms, turn to thy rest.
Let them rave.
Shadows of the silver birk
Sweep the green that folds thy grave.
Let them rave.

II.

Thee nor carketh care nor slander;
Nothing but the small cold worm
Fretteth thine enshrouded form.

Let them rave.

Light and shadow ever wander
O'er the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

III.

Thou wilt not turn upon thy bed;
Chaunteth not the brooding bee
Sweeter tones than calumny?

Let them rave.

Thou wilt never raise thine head
From the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

IV.

Crocodiles wept tears for thee;
The woodbine and eglare
Drip sweeter dews than traitor's tear.

Let them rave.

Rain makes music in the tree
O'er the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

V.

Round thee blow, self-pleached deep,
Bramble roses, faint and pale,
And long purples of the dale.

Let them rave.

These in every shower creep
Thro' the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

VI.

The gold-eyed kingcups fine ;
The frail bluebell peereth over
Rare broidry of the purple clover.

Let them rave.

Kings have no such couch as thine,
As the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

VII.

Wild words wander here and there :
God's great gift of speech abused
Makes thy memory confused :

But let them rave.

The balm-cricket carols clear
In the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT.

PART I.

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky ;
And thro' the field the road runs by

To many-tower'd Camelot ;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver.
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot,

Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle embowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses ; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot :
But who hath seen her wave her hand ?
Or at the casement seen her stand ?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott ?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot :
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers ' 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott.'

PART II.

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot :

There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:

And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd ;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode ;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide ;
The mirror crack'd from side to side ;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot ;

Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high
Silent into Camelot.

Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, 'She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.'

ELEÄNORE.

I.

Thy dark eyes open'd not,
Nor first reveal'd themselves to English air,
For there is nothing here,
Which, from the outward to the inward brought,
Moulded thy baby thought.
Far off from human neighbourhood,
Thou wert born, on a summer morn,
A mile beneath the cedar-wood.
Thy bounteous forehead was not fann'd
With breezes from our oaken glades,
But thou wert nursed in some delicious land
Of lavish lights, and floating shades:
And flattering thy childish thought
The oriental fairy brought,
At the moment of thy birth,
From old well-heads of haunted rills,
And the hearts of purple hills,
And shadow'd coves on a sunny shore,
The choicest wealth of all the earth,
Jewel or shell, or starry ore,
To deck thy cradle, Elcänore.

II.

Or the yellow-banded bees,
Thro' half-open lattices
Coming in the scented breeze,
Fed thee, a child, lying alone,
With whitest honey in fairy gardens cull'd—
A glorious child, dreaming alone,
In silk-soft folds, upon yielding down,
With the hum of swarming bees
Into dreamful slumber lull'd.

III.

Who may minister to thee?
Summer herself should minister
To thee, with fruitage golden-rinded
On golden salvers, or it may be,
Youngest Autumn, in a bower
Grape-thicken'd from the light, and blinded
With many a deep-hued bell-like flower
Of fragrant trailers, when the air
Sleepeth over all the heaven,
And the crag that fronts the Even,
All along the shadowing shore,
Crimsons over an inland mere,
Eleänore!

IV.

How may full-sail'd verse express,
How may measured words adore
The full-flowing harmony
Of thy swan-like stateliness,
Eleänore?
The luxuriant symmetry
Of thy floating gracefulness,
Eleänore?
Every turn and glance of thine,
Every lineament divine,
Eleänore,

And the steady sunset glow,
That stays upon thee? For in thee
Is nothing sudden, nothing single;
Like two streams of incense free
From one censer in one shrine,
Thought and motion mingle,
Mingle ever. Motions flow
To one another, even as tho'
They were modulated so
To an unheard melody,
Which lives about thee, and a sweep
Of richest pauses, evermore
Drawn from each other mellow-deep;
Who may express thee, Eleänore?

V.

I stand before thee, Eleänore;
I see thy beauty gradually unfold,
Daily and hourly, more and more.
I muse, as in a trance, the while
Slowly, as from a cloud of gold,
Comes out thy deep ambrosial smile.
I muse, as in a trance, whene'er
The languors of thy love-deep eyes
Float on to me. I would I were
So tranced, so rapt in ecstasies,
To stand apart, and to adore,
Gazing on thee for evermore,
Serene, imperial Eleänore!

VI.

Sometimes, with most intensity
Gazing, I seem to see
Thought folded over thought, smiling asleep,
Slowly awaken'd, grow so full and deep
In thy large eyes, that, overpower'd quite,
I cannot veil, or droop my sight,
But am as nothing in its light:
As tho' a star, in inmost heaven set,
Ev'n while we gaze on it,

Should slowly round his orb, and slowly grow
To a full face, there like a sun remain
Fix'd—then as slowly fade again,
And draw itself to what it was before ;
So full, so deep, so slow,
Thought seems to come and go
In thy large eyes, imperial Eleānore.

VII.

As thunder-clouds that, hung on high,
Roof'd the world with doubt and fear,
Floating thro' an evening atmosphere,
Grow golden all about the sky ;
In thee all passion becomes passionless,
Touch'd by thy spirit's mellowness,
Losing his fire and active might
In a silent meditation,
Falling into a still delight,
And luxury of contemplation :
As waves that up a quiet cove
Rolling slide, and lying still
Shadow forth the banks at will :
Or sometimes they swell and move,
Pressing up against the land,
With motions of the outer sea :
And the self-same influence
Controlleth all the soul and sense
Of Passion gazing upon thee.
His bow-string slacken'd, languid Love,
Leaning his cheek upon his hand,
Droops both his wings, regarding thee,
And so would languish evermore,
Serene, imperial Eleānore.

VIII.

But when I see thee roam, with tresses unconfined,
While the amorous, odorous wind
Breathes low between the sunset and the moon ;
Or, in a shadowy saloon,
On silken cushions half reclined ;

I watch thy grace ; and in its place
My heart a charmed slumber keeps,
While I muse upon thy face ;
And a languid fire creeps
Thro' my veins to all my frame,
Dissolvingly and slowly : soon
From thy rose-red lips MY name
Floweth ; and then, as in a swoon,
With dinning sound my ears are rife,
My tremulous tongue faltereth,
I lose my colour, I lose my breath,
I drink the cup of a costly death,
Brimm'd with delirious draughts of warmest life.
I die with my delight, before
I hear what I would hear from thee ;
Yet tell my name again to me,
I *would* be dying evermore,
So dying ever, Eleänore.

OF OLD SAT FREEDOM ON THE HEIGHTS.

Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet :
Above her shook the starry lights :
She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,
Self-gather'd in her prophet-mind,
But fragments of her mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind.

Then stopt she down thro' town and field
To mingle with the human race,
And part by part to men reveal'd
The fullness of her face—

Grave mother of majestic works,
From her isle-altar gazing down,
Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
And, King-like, wears the crown :

Her open eyes desire the truth.
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them. May perpetual youth
Keep dry their light from tears ;
That her fair form may stand and shine,
Make bright our days and light our dreams,
Turning to scorn with lips divine
The falsehood of extremes !

LOVE THOU THY LAND.

Love thou thy land, with love far-brought
From out the storied Past, and used
Within the Present, but transfused
Thro' future time by power of thought.
True love turn'd round on fixed poles,
Love, that endures not sordid ends,
For English natures, freemen, friends,
Thy brothers and immortal souls.
But pamper not a hasty time,
Nor feed with crude imaginings
The herd, wild hearts and feeble wings
That every sophister can lime.
Deliver not the tasks of might
To weakness, neither hide the ray
From those, not blind, who wait for day,
Tho' sitting girt with doubtful light.
Make knowledge circle with the winds ;
But let her herald, Reverence, fly
Before her to whatever sky
Bear seed of men and growth of minds.
Watch what main-currents draw the years :
Cut Prejudice against the grain :
But gentle words are always gain :
Regard the weakness of thy peers :

Nor toil for title, place, or touch
Of pensions, neither count on praise :
It grows to guerdon after-days :
Nor deal in watch-words overmuch :
Not clinging to some ancient saw ;
Not master'd by some modern term ;
Not swift nor slow to change, but firm :
And in its season bring the law ;
That from Discussion's lip may fall
With Life, that, working strongly, binds—
Set in all lights by many minds,
To close the interests of all.
For Nature also, cold and warm,
And moist and dry, devising long,
Thro' many agents making strong,
Matures the individual form.
Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease.
We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.
So let the change which comes be free
To ingroove itself with that which flies,
And work, a joint of state, that plies
Its office, moved with sympathy.
A saying, hard to shape in act ;
For all the past of Time reveals
A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,
Wherever Thought hath wedded Fact.
Ev'n now we hear with inward strife
A motion toiling in the gloom—
The Spirit of the years to come
Yearning to mix himself with Life.
A slow-develop'd strength awaits
Completion in a painful school ;
Phantoms of other forms of rule,
New Majesties of mighty States—

The warders of the growing hour,
But vague in vapour, hard to mark ;
And round them sea and air are dark
With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly join'd,
Is bodied forth the second whole.
Regard gradation, lest the soul
Of Discord race the rising wind ;

A wind to puff your idol-fires,
And heap their ashes on the head ;
To shame the boast so often made,
That we are wiser than our sires.

Oh yet, if Nature's evil star
Drive men in manhood, as in youth,
To follow flying steps of Truth
Across the brazen bridge of war—

If New and Old, disastrous feud,
Must ever shock, like armed foes,
And this be true, till Time shall close,
That Principles are rain'd in blood ;

Not yet the wise of heart would cease
To hold his hope thro' shame and guilt,
But with his hand against the hilt,
Would pace the troubled land, like Peace ;

Not less, tho' dogs of Faction bay,
Would serve his kind in deed and word,
Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,
That knowledge takes the sword away—

Would love the gleams of good that broke
From either side, nor veil his eyes :
And if some dreadful need should rise
Would strike, and firmly, and one stroke :

To-morrow yet would reap to-day,
As we bear blossom of the dead ;
Earn well the thrifty months, nor wed
Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.

YOU ASK ME, WHY, THO' ILL AT EASE.

You ask me, why, tho' ill at ease,
Within this region I subsist,
Whose spirits falter in the mist,
And languish for the purple seas.

It is the land that freemen till,
That sober-suited Freedom chose,
The land, where girt with friends or foes
A man may speak the thing he will;

A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown,
Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent:

Where faction seldom gathers head,
But by degrees to fullness wrought,
The strength of some diffusive thought
Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute
Opinion, and induce a time
When single thought is civil crime,
And individual freedom mute;

Tho' Power should make from land to land
The name of Britain trebly great—
Tho' every channel of the State
Should fill and choke with golden sand—

Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth,
Wild wind! I seek a warmer sky,
And I will see before I die
The palms and temples of the South.

MORTE D'ARTHUR.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonness about their Lord,
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known :
But now delay not : take Excalibur,

And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt :
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as besem'd
Thy fæalty, nor like a noble knight :

For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud,
'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'
To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence :
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,

Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
' My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

ULYSSES.

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel : I will drink
Life to the lees : all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone ; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea : I am become a name ;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known ; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,

Myself not least, but honour'd of them all ;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met ;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use !
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains : but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things ; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port ; the vessel puffs her sail :
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old ;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil ;
Death closes all : but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks :
The long day wanes : the slow moon climbs : the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows ; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down :
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven ; that which we are, we are ;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

ST. AGNES' EVE.

Deep on the convent-roof the snows
Are sparkling to the moon :
My breath to heaven like vapour goes :
May my soul follow soon !
The shadows of the convent-towers
Slant down the snowy sward,
Still creeping with the creeping hours
That lead me to my Lord :
Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
As are the frosty skies,
Or this first snowdrop of the year
That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
To yonder shining ground ;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
To yonder argent round ;
So shows my soul before the Lamb,
My spirit before Thee ;

So in mine earthly house I am,
To that I hope to be:
Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,
Thro' all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors;
The flashes come and go;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strows her lights below,
And deepens on and up! the gates
Roll back, and far within
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
To make me pure of sin.
The sabbaths of Eternity,
One sabbath deep and wide—
A light upon the shining sea—
The Bridegroom with his bride!

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK.

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.
O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!
And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!
Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

[From *The Princess*.]

I.

THE SPLENDOUR FALLS ON CASTLE WALLS.

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story :
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle ; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear ! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going !
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing !
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying :
Blow, bugle ; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river :
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

II.

TEARS, IDLE TEARS.

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge ;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

[From *In Memoriam*.]

XIX.

The Danube to the Severn gave
The darken'd heart that beat no more;
They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,
And hush'd my deepest grief of all,
When fill'd with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls;
My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.

XXXV.

Yet if some voice that man could trust
Should murmur from the narrow house,
'The cheeks drop in; the body bows;
Man dies: nor is there hope in dust.'

Might I not say? 'Yet even here,
But for one hour, O Love, I strive
To keep so sweet a thing alive:'
But I should turn mine ears and hear
The moanings of the homeless sea,
The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
The dust of continents to be;
And Love would answer with a sigh,
'The sound of that forgetful shore
Will change my sweetness more and more,
Half-dead to know that I shall die.'

O me, what profits it to put
An idle case? If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut,
Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,
Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape
Had bruised the herb and crush'd the grape,
And bask'd and batten'd in the woods.

LIV.

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;
That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

CIX.

Heart-affluence in discursive talk
From household fountains never dry;
The critic clearness of an eye,
That saw thro' all the Muses' walk;

Seraphic intellect and force
To seize and throw the doubts of man;
Impassion'd logic, which outran
The hearer in its fiery course;

High nature amorous of the good,
But touch'd with no ascetic gloom;
And passion pure in snowy bloom
Thro' all the years of April blood;

A love of freedom rarely felt,
Of freedom in her regal seat
Of England; not the schoolboy heat,
The blind hysterics of the Celt;

And manhood fused with female grace
In such a sort, the child would twine
A trustful hand, unask'd, in thine,
And find his comfort in thy face;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes
Have look'd on: if they look'd in vain,
My shame is greater who remain,
Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

CXXIII.

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen !
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea.
The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands ;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.
But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true ;
For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

[From *Maud*, Part I. xviii.]

I.

I have led her home, my love, my only friend.
There is none like her, none.
And never yet so warmly ran my blood
And sweetly, on and on
Calming itself to the long-wish'd-for end,
Full to the banks, close on the promised good.

II.

None like her, none.
Just now the dry-tongued laurels' pattering talk
Seem'd her light foot along the garden walk,
And shook my heart to think she comes once more ;
But even then I heard her close the door,
The gates of Heaven are closed, and she is gone.

III.

There is none like her, none.
Nor will be when our summers have deceased.
O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East,
Sighing for Lebanon,
Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here increased,

Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
And looking to the South, and fed
With honey'd rain and delicate air,
And haunted by the starry head
Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,
And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;
And over whom thy darkness must have spread
With such delight as theirs of old, thy great
Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from whom she came.

IV.

Here will I lie, while these long branches sway,
And you fair stars that crown a happy day
Go in and out as if at merry play,
Who am no more so all forlorn,
As when it seem'd far better to be born
To labour and the mattock-harden'd hand,
Than nursed at ease and brought to understand
A sad astrology, the boundless plan
That makes you tyrants in your iron skies,
Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
His nothingness into man.

V.

But now shine on, and what care I,
Who in this stormy gulf have found a pearl
The countercharm of space and hollow sky,
And do accept my madness, and would die
To save from some slight shame one simple girl.

VI.

Would die; for sullen-seeming Death may give
More life to Love than is or ever was
In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to live.
Let no one ask me how it came to pass;
It seems that I am happy, that to me
A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

VII.

Not die ; but live a life of truest breath,
And teach true life to fight with mortal wrongs.
O, why should Love, like men in drinking-songs,
Spice his fair banquet with the dust of death?
Make answer, Maud my bliss,
Maud made my Maud by that long loving kiss,
Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this?
'The dusky strand of Death inwoven here
With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself more dear.'

VIII.

Is that enchanted moan only the swell
Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?
And hark the clock within, the silver knell
Of twelve sweet hours that past in bridal white,
And died to live, long as my pulses play ;
But now by this my love has closed her sight
And given false death her hand, and stol'n away
To dreamful wastes where footless fancies dwell
Among the fragments of the golden day.
May nothing there her maiden grace affright!
Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy spell.
My bride to be, my evermore delight,
My own heart's heart, my ownest own, farewell ;
It is but for a little space I go :
And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell
Beat to the noiseless music of the night!
Has our whole earth gone nearer to the glow
Of your soft splendours that you look so bright?
I have climb'd nearer out of lonely Hell.
Beat, happy stars, timing with things below,
Beat with my heart more blest than heart can tell,
Blest, but for some dark undercurrent woe
That seems to draw—but it shall not be so :
Let all be well, be well.

THE BROOK.

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorns, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

[Published in 1852.]

I.

Bury the Great Duke
With an empire's lamentation,
Let us bury the Great Duke
To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation,
Mourning when their leaders fall,
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

II.

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
Here, in streaming London's central roar.
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore.

III.

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,
As fits an universal woe,
Let the long long procession go,
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,
And let the mournful martial music blow;
The last great Englishman is low.

IV.

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
Remembering all his greatness in the Past.
No more in soldier fashion will he greet
With lifted hand the gazer in the street.
O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute:
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,
Whole in himself, a common good.
Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,
Our greatest yet with least pretence,
Great in council and great in war,
Foremost captain of his time,
Rich in saving common-sense,
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.
O good gray head which all men knew,
O voice from which their omens all men drew,
O iron nerve to true occasion true,
O fall'n at length that tower of strength
Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!

Such was he whom we deplore.
The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
The great World-victor's victor will be seen no more.

V.

All is over and done :
Render thanks to the Giver,
England, for thy son.
Let the bell be toll'd.
Render thanks to the Giver,
And render him to the mould.
Under the cross of gold
That shines over city and river,
There he shall rest for ever
Among the wise and the bold.
Let the bell be toll'd :
And a reverent people behold
The towering car, the sable steeds :
Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,
Dark in its funeral fold.
Let the bell be toll'd :
And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd ;
And the sound of the sorrowing anthem roll'd
Thro' the dome of the golden cross ;
And the volleying cannon thunder his loss ;
He knew their voices of old.
For many a time in many a clime
His captain's-ear has heard them boom
Bellowing victory, bellowing doom :
When he with those deep voices wrought,
Guarding realms and kings from shame ;
With those deep voices our dead captain taught
The tyrant, and asserts his claim
In that dread sound to the great name,
Which he has worn so pure of blame,
In praise and in dispraise the same,
A man of well-attemper'd frame.
O civic muse, to such a name,

To such a name for ages long,
To such a name,
Preserve a broad approach of fame,
And ever-echoing avenues of song.

VI.

Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest,
With banner and with music, with soldier and with priest,
With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest?
Mighty Seaman, this is he
Was great by land as thou by sea.
Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,
The greatest sailor since our world began.
Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
To thee the greatest soldier comes;
For this is he
Was great by land as thou by sea;
His foes were thine; he kept us free;
O give him welcome, this is he
Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
And worthy to be laid by thee;
For this is England's greatest son,
He that gain'd a hundred fights,
Nor ever lost an English gun;
This is he that far away
Against the myriads of Assaye
Clash'd with his fiery few and won;
And underneath another sun,
Warring on a later day,
Round affrighted Lisbon drew
The treble works, the vast designs
Of his labour'd rampart-lines,
Where he greatly stood at bay,
Whence he issued forth anew,
And ever great and greater grew,
Beating from the wasted vines
Back to France her banded swarms,
Back to France with countless blows,

Till o'er the hills her eagles flew
Beyond the Pyrenean pines,
Follow'd up in valley and glen
With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
Roll of cannon and clash of arms,
And England pouring on her foes.
Such a war had such a close.
Again their ravening eagle rose
In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing wings,
And barking for the thrones of kings;
Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown
On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler down;
A day of onsets of despair!
Dash'd on every rocky square
Their surging charges foam'd themselves away;
Last, the Prussian trumpet blew;
Thro' the long-tormented air
Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,
And down we swept and charged and overthrew.
So great a soldier taught us there,
What long-enduring hearts could do
In that world-earthquake, Waterloo!
Mighty Seaman, tender and true,
And pure as he from taint of craven guile,
O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
If aught of things that here befall
Touch a spirit among things divine,
If love of country move thee there at all,
Be glad, because his bones are laid by thine!
And thro' the centuries let a people's voice
In full acclaim,
A people's voice,
The proof and echo of all human fame,
A people's voice, when they rejoice
At civic revel and pomp and game,
Attest their great commander's claim
With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
Eternal honour to his name.

VII.

A people's voice! we are a people yet.
Tho' all men else their nobler dreams forget,
Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers;
Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set
His Briton in blown seas and storming showers,
We have a voice, with which to pay the debt
Of boundless love and reverence and regret
To those great men who fought, and kept it ours.
And keep it ours, O God, from brute control;
O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul
Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
And save the one true seed of freedom sown
Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
That sober freedom out of which there springs
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings;
For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just.
But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
Remember him who led your hosts;
He bad you guard the sacred coasts.
Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall;
His voice is silent in your council-hall
For ever; and whatever tempests lour
For ever silent; even if they broke
In thunder, silent; yet remember all
He spoke among you, and the Man who spoke;
Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,
Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power;
Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow
Thro' either babbling world of high and low;
Whose life was work, whose language rife
With rugged maxims hewn from life;
Who never spoke against a foe;
Whose eighty winters freeze with one rebuke
All great self-seekers trampling on the right:

Truth-teller was our England's Alfred named ;
Truth-lover was our English Duke ;
Whatever record leap to light
He never shall be shamed.

VIII.

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars
Now to glorious burial slowly borne,
Follow'd by the brave of other lands,
He, on whom from both her open hands
Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,
And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.
Yea, let all good things await
Him who cares not to be great,
But as he saves or-serves the state.
Not once or twice in our rough island-story,
The path of duty was the way to glory :
He that walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and learns to deaden
Love of self, before his journey closes,
He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
Into glossy purples, which outred
All voluptuous garden-roses.
Not once or twice in our fair island-story,
The path of duty was the way to glory :
He, that ever following her commands,
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
His path upward, and prevail'd,
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
To which our God Himself is moon and sun.
Such was he : his work is done.
But while the races of mankind endure,
Let his great example stand
Colossal, seen of every land,
And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure :
Till in all lands and thro' all human story
The path of duty be the way to glory :

And let the land whose hearths he saved from shame
For many and many an age proclaim
At civic revel and pomp and game,
And when the long-illuminated cities flame,
Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,
With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
Eternal honour to his name.

IX.

Peace, his triumph will be sung
By some yet un moulded tongue
Far on in summers that we shall not see:
Peace, it is a day of pain
For one about whose patriarchal knee
Late the little children clung:
O peace, it is a day of pain
For one, upon whose hand and heart and brain
Once the weight and fate of Europe hung.
Ours the pain, be his the gain!
More than is of man's degree
Must be with us, watching here
At this, our great solemnity.
Whom we see not we revere;
We revere, and we refrain
From talk of battles loud and vain,
And brawling memories all too free
For such a wise humility
As befits a solemn fane:
We revere, and while we hear
The tides of Music's golden sea
Setting toward eternity,
Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,
Until we doubt not that for one so true
There must be other nobler work to do
Than when he fought at Waterloo,
And Victor he must ever be.
For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
And break the shore, and evermore
Make and break, and work their will;

Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
Round us, each with different powers,
And other forms of life than ours,
What know we greater than the soul?
On God and Godlike men we build our trust.
Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears:
The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears:
The black earth yawns: the mortal disappears;
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
He is gone who seem'd so great.—
Gone; but nothing can bereave him
Of the force he made his own
Being here, and we believe him
Something far advanced in State,
And that he wears a truer crown
Than any wreath that man can weave him.
Speak no more of his renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast cathedral leave him.
God accept him, Christ receive him.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.

I.

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!' he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

II.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:

Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

III.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

IV.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

V.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well

Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

VI.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

NORTHERN FARMER.

OLD STYLE.

I.

Wheer 'asta beän saw long and meä liggin' 'ere aloän?
Noorse? thourt nowt o' a noorse: whoy, Doctor's abeän an' agoän:
Says that I moänt 'a naw moor aäle: but I beänt a fool:
Git ma my aäle, fur I beänt a-gawin' to breäk my rule.

II.

Doctors, they knaws nowt, fur a says what's nawways true:
Naw soort o' koind o' use to säy the things that a do.
I've 'ed my point o' aäle ivry noight sin' I beän 'ere,
An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight for foorty year.

III.

Parson's a beän loikewise, an' a sittin' 'ere o' my bed.
'The amoighty's a taäkin o' you¹ to 'issén, my friend,' a said,
An' a towd ma my sins, an' s toithe were due, an' I gied it in hond;
I done moy duty boy 'um, as I 'a done boy the lond.

IV.

Larn'd a ma' beä. I reckons I 'annot sa mooch to larn.
But a cast oop, thot a did, 'bout Bessy Marris's barne.
Thaw a knaws I hallus voäted wi' Squire an' choorch and staäte,
An' i' the woost o' toimes I wur niver agin the raäte.

¹ ou as in hour.

V.

An' I hallus coom'd to 's choorch afoor moy Sally wur deäd,
 An' 'eärd 'um a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock¹ ower my
 'eäd,
 An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd, but I thowt a 'ad summut to
 saäy,
 An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd awaäy.

VI.

Bessy Marris's barne! tha knaws she laäid it to meä.
 Mowt a beän, mayhap, for she wur a bad un, sheä.
 'Siver, I kep 'um, I kep 'um, my lass, tha mun understand;
 I done moy duty boy 'um as I 'a done boy the lond.

VII.

But Parson a cooms an' a goäs, an' a says it eäsy an' freeä
 'The amoighty's a taäkin o' you to 'issén, my friend,' says 'eä
 I weänt saäy men be loiars, thaw summun said it in 'aäste:
 But 'e reäds wonn sarmin a weeäk, an' I 'a stubb'd Thurnaby waäste.

VIII.

D'ya moind the waäste, my lass? naw, naw, tha was not born then,
 Theer wur a boggle in it, I often 'eärd 'um mysen;
 Moäst loike a butter-bump², fur I 'eärd 'um about an' about,
 But I stubb'd 'um oop wi' the lot, an' raäved an' rembled 'um out.

IX.

Keäper's it wur; fo' they fun 'um theer a-laäid of 'is faäce
 Down i' the wold 'enemies³ afoor I coom'd to the plaäce.
 Noäks or Thimbleby—toäner⁴ 'ed shot 'um as deäd as a naäil.
 Noäks wur 'ang'd for it oop at 'soize—but git ma my aäle.

X.

Dubbut looök at the waäste: theer warn't not feeäd for a cow;
 Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looök at it now—
 Warnt worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer's lots of feeäd,
 Fourscoor⁵ yows upon it an' some on it down i' seeäd.

¹ Cockchafer.² Bittern.³ Anemones.⁴ One or other.⁵ ou as in hour.

XI.

Nobbut a bit on it's left, an' I meän'd to 'a stubb'd it at fall,
 Done it ta-year I meän'd, an' runn'd plow thruff it an' all,
 If godamoighty an' parson 'ud nobbut let ma aloän,
 Meä, wi' haäte hoonderd haäcre o' Squire's, an' lond o' my oän.

XII.

Do godamoighty knaw what a's doing a-taäkin' o' meä?
 I beänt wonn as saws 'ere a beän an' yonder a peä;
 An' Squire 'ull be sa mad an' all—a' dear a' dear!
 And I 'a managed for Squire coom Michaelmas thutty year.

XIII.

A mowt 'a taäen owd Joänes, as 'ant nor a 'aäpoth o' sense,
 Or a mowt 'a taäen young Robins—a niver mended a fence:
 But godamoighty a moost taäke meä an' taäke ma now
 Wi' aäf the cows to cauve an' Thurnaby hoälms to plow!

XIV.

Looök 'ow quoloty smoiles when they seeäs ma a passin' boy,
 Says to thessén naw doubt 'what a man a beä sewer-loyl.'
 Fur they knaws what I beän to Squire sin fust a coom'd to
 the 'All;
 I done moy duty by Squire an' I done moy duty boy hall.

XV.

Squire's i' Lunnon, an' summun I reckons 'ull 'a to wroite,
 For whoä's to howd the lond ater meä thot muddles ma quoit;
 Sartin-sewer I beä, thot a weänt niver give it to Joänes,
 Naw, nor a moänt to Robins—a niver rembles the stoäns.

XVI.

But summun 'ull come ater meä mayhap wi' 'is kittle o' steäm
 Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds wi' the Divil's oän teäm.
 Sin' I mun doy I mun doy, thaw loife they says is sweet,
 But sin' I mun doy I mun doy, for I couldn abeär to see it.

XVII.

What atta stannin' theer fur, an' doesn bring ma the aäle?
 Doctor's a 'toättler, lass, an a's hallus i' the owd taäle;
 I weänt breäk rules fur Doctor, a knaws naw moor nor a floy;
 Git ma my aäle I tell tha, an' if I mun doy I mun doy.

TITHONUS.

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
 The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
 Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
 And after many a summer dies the swan.
 Me only cruel immortality
 Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
 Here at the quiet limit of the world,
 A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
 The ever-silent spaces of the East,
 Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
 So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
 Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
 To his great heart none other than a God!
 I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'
 Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
 Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
 But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
 And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
 And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
 To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
 Immortal age beside immortal youth,
 And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
 Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
 Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
 Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
 To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
 Why should a man desire in any way
 To vary from the kindly race of men,
 Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
 Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam

Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
 Of happy men that have the power to die,
 And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
 Release me, and restore me to the ground ;
 Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave :
 Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn ;
 I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
 And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

MILTON.

(Alcaics.)

O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
 O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
 God-gifted organ-voice of England,
 Milton, a name to resound for ages ;
 Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
 Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,
 Tower, as the deep-domed empyræan
 Rings to the roar of an angel onset—
 Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
 The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
 And bloom profuse and cedar arches
 Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
 Where some refulgent sunset of India
 Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
 And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
 Whisper in odorous heights of even.

THE SAILOR BOY.

He rose at dawn and, fired with hope,
 Shot o'er the seething harbour-bar,
 And reach'd the ship and caught the rope,
 And whistled to the morning star.
 And while he whistled long and loud
 He heard a fierce mermaiden cry,
 'O boy, tho' thou art young and proud,
 I see the place where thou wilt lie.

'The sands and yeasty surges mix
In caves about the dreary bay,
And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,
And in thy heart the scrawl shall play.'

'Fool,' he answer'd, 'death is sure
To those that stay and those that roam,
But I will nevermore endure
To sit with empty hands at home.

'My mother clings about my neck,
My sisters crying, "Stay for shame;"
My father raves of death and wreck,
They are all to blame, they are all to blame.

'God help me! save I take my part
Of danger on the roaring sea,
A devil rises in my heart,
Far worse than any death to me.'

[From *Idylls of the King: Guinevere.*]

ARTHUR'S FAREWELL.

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.

Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neigh'd
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
The doom of treason and the flaming death,
(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is past.
The pang—which while I weigh'd thy heart with one
Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.

But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
"I loathe thee:" yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow:
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they call
My sister's son—no kin of mine, who leagues
With Lords of the White Horse, heathen, and knights,
Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side; see thee no more—
Farewell!

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that biest.

THE REVENGE.

A BALLAD OF THE FLEET.

I.

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnacle, like a flutter'd bird, came flying from far away:
'Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three!'
Then sware Lord Thomas Howard: 'Fore God I am no coward;
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow quick.
We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-three?'

II.

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: 'I know you are no coward;
You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left them, my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain.'

III.

So Lord Howard past away with five ships of war that day,
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the land
Very carefully and slow,
Men of Bideford in Devon,
And we laid them on the ballast down below;
For we brought them all aboard,
And they blest him in their pain, that they were not left to
Spain,
To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the glory of the Lord.

IV.

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to fight,
And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather bow.
'Shall we fight or shall we fly?
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die!

There 'll be little of us left by the time this sun be set.
And Sir Richard said again : ' We be all good English men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the devil,
For I never turn'd my back upon Don or devil yet.'

V.

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and we roar'd a hurrah, and so
The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart of the foe,
With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety sick below ;
For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left were seen,
And the little Revenge ran on thro' the long sea-lane between.

VI.

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from their decks and
laugh'd,
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad little craft
Running on and on, till delay'd
By their mountain-like San Philip that, of fifteen hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

VII.

And while now the great San Philip hung above us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day,
And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard lay,
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

VIII.

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought herself and went
Having that within her womb that had left her ill content ;
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought us hand to
hand,
For a dozen times they came with their pikes and musqueteers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

IX.

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over the
summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and the fifty-
three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons
came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-thunder
and flame ;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead
and her shame.
For some were sunk and many were shatter'd, and so could
fight us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before?

X.

For he said 'Fight on! fight on!'
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck;
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer night was
gone,
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly dead,
And himself he was wounded again in the side and the head,
And he said 'Fight on! fight on!'

XI.

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far over the
summer sea,
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay round us all in a
ring;
But they dared not touch us again, for they fear'd that we still
could sting,
So they watch'd what the end would be.
And we had not fought them in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate strife;

And the sick men down in the hold were most of them stark
and cold,
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder was all
of it spent;
And the masts and the rigging were lying over the side;
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
'We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more
At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!'

XII.

And the gunner said 'Ay, ay,' but the seamen made reply:
'We have children, we have wives,
And the Lord hath spared our lives.
We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to let us go;
We shall live to fight again and to strike another blow.'
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the foe.

XIII.

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him then,
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard caught at last,
And they praised him to his face with their courtly foreign grace;
But he rose upon their decks, and he cried:
'I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant man and true;
I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do:
With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die!'
And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV.

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant and true,
And had holden the power and glory of Spain so cheap
That he dared her with one little ship and his English few;
Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they knew,
But they sank his body with honour down into the deep,

And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier alien crew,
And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for her own ;
When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke from sleep,
And the water began to heave and the weather to moan,
And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earthquake grew,
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their masts and
 their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shatter'd navy
 of Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by the island crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

TO VIRGIL.

Written at the request of the Mantuans for the nineteenth centenary of
Virgil's death.

I.

Roman Virgil, thou that singest
 Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
 wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre ;

II.

Landscape-lover, lord of language
 more than he that sang the Works and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
 flashing out from many a golden phrase ;

III.

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
 tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd ;
All the charm of all the Muses
 often flowering in a lonely word ;

IV.

Poet of the happy Tityrus
 piping underneath his beechen bowers ;
Poet of the poet-satyr
 whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers ;

V.

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
 in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
 unlaborious earth and oarless sea ;

VI.

Thou that seëst Universal
 Nature moved by Universal Mind ;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
 at the doubtful doom of human kind ;

VII.

Light among the vanish'd ages ;
 star that gildest yet this phantom shore ;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
 kings and realms that pass to rise no more ;

VIII.

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
 fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
 sound for ever of Imperial Rome—

IX.

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
 and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
 sunder'd once from all the human race,

X.

I salute thee, Mantovano,
 I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
 ever moulded by the lips of man.

HYMN.

[From *Akbar's Dream.*]

I.

Once again thou flamest heavenward, once again we see thee rise.
Every morning is thy birthday gladdening human hearts and eyes.

Every morning here we greet it, bowing lowly down before
thee,
Thee the Godlike, thee the changeless, in thine ever-changing
skies.

II.

Shadow-maker, shadow-slayer, arrowing light from clime to clime,
Hear thy myriad laureates hail thee monarch in their woodland
rhyme.

Warble bird, and open flower, and, men, below the dome of
azure
Kneel adoring Him the Timeless in the flame that measures
Time!

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE.

I.

Will my tiny spark of being wholly vanish in your deeps and
heights?

Must my day be dark by reason, O ye Heavens, of your bound-
less nights,

Rush of Suns, and roll of systems, and your fiery clash of
meteorites?

II.

'Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the limit of thy human state,
Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which alone is
great,

Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor the silent Opener of the
Gate.'

CROSSING THE BAR.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me !
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark !
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark ;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

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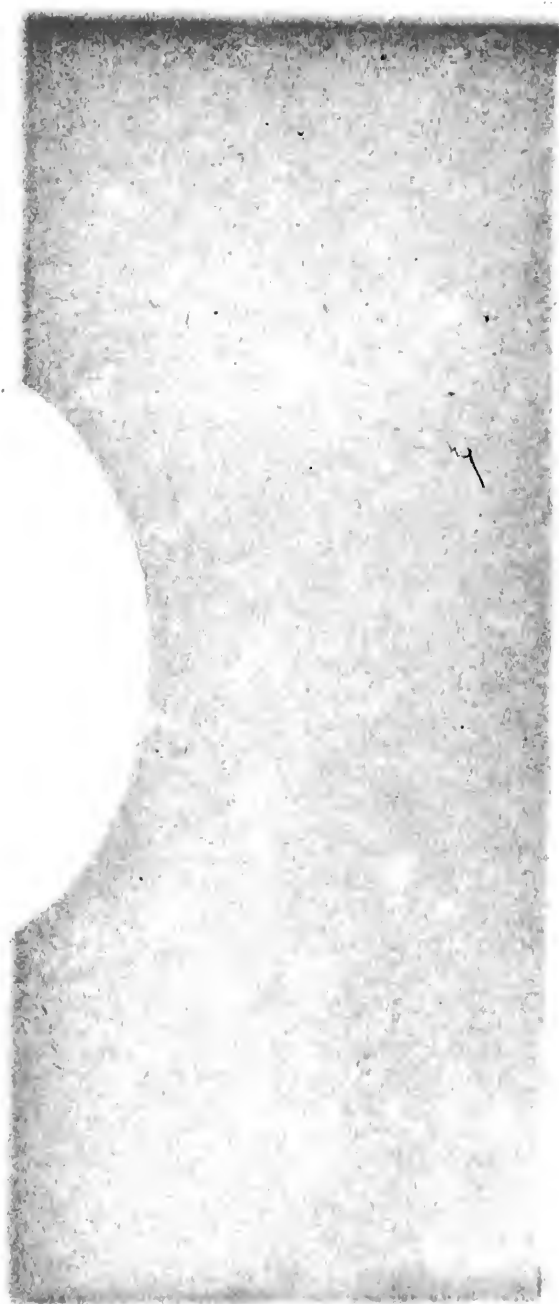
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